
Seiun wo Kakeru 4

The Visitors Arc

Fumitoshi Hizen

Chapter 45 – The Visitors

Just what kind of attitude should one assume toward the 5 people sent by Nazioni's ruler?

An emergency meeting was set up in response to this problem until the welcome banquet is hosted.

The day was coming close to its end.

Eiji and the rest met in a hurry inside the tribal chief's house and gathered around the table in silence. All of them were waiting for the start of the meeting.

It was hard to breath.

It seemed as though the air formed a separate entity that didn't allow them to breathe.

They felt as if being restrained by an invisible weigh from above.

Such a matter was difficult to deal with for them.

Sitting in the chair, Eiji thought about the possible target of this meeting.

What Nazioni aimed for was to urge Eiji to conduct further development of the village, at the same time, raising their tax revenue.

For that reason, Franko demanded them to let his people help with smithing.

In other words, it wasn't just about how they should deal with the newcomers, but also in what way should Eiji use them, such was the point of the talk.

Eiji had no objections about raising the number of disciples.

The village executives appeared one after another.

What kind of welcome should they display to the newcomers? – Was it due to the need of understanding the importance of that question?

Everyone seemed to have a stern expression.

It would probably be so.

Eiji didn't know what the purpose of the newcomers was; nevertheless, there was no doubt they were here to grasp the actual condition of the village and to carry out other spy-related tasks.

These people will probably not resort to any method that will result in a disturbance or harm; still, nobody could predict how the things will turn out if their relationship with Nazioni worsens.

Bona looked around inside the room.

She checked whether Eiji, too, was brought here.

Apart from him, there were Mike, Fernando, Giorgio, and Bernard.

The only missing person was Jane.

– So, has everyone gathered?

– Yes. However, I told Jane to prepare the banquet just as Granny instructed.

– Umu. Then, shall we begin?

Mike's face was stern. It seemed that his feelings were clearly hurt because of the newcomers' arrival.

Bernard and Giorgio bent their mouths into a '^\'' letter shape and looked displeased as well. Philip became even more silent than usual, and a sense of intimidation was leaking from him.

The only ones who kept a calm attitude without getting emotional were Fernando and Eiji.

Everyone felt the anger inside of them toward the outsiders who had suddenly arrived.

Even a single rejection made before could have significantly changed everyone's response.

It seemed that Franko was good at rubbing people's feeling the wrong way.

Because of their sudden visit, it was impossible for them to do any preparation.

The least they will have to do will probably be supplying the visitors with a banquet and bedding.

And once it comes to this, the number of general goods, such as charcoal and firewood, will decrease because of the need to supply the outsiders.

– Shall we start quickly? Let's hear everyone's opinions regarding what measure we should take against the newcomers.

– Let's banish them from our village. It's not like we can trust them,

right?

– Damn right!

At Mike's immediate statement, Bernard followed up with the same consent.

The other participants didn't express their opinions, however, none of them objected.

Looks like the newcomers are quite resented. Well, I guess it would be natural – he thought.

For Eiji, it was a predictable response.

There was no way for a ruler to care about public interests rather than their own benefit coming from tax revenue.

As far as Eiji learned from Tal Village, Nazioni's decisions were never good. On top of that, the tax and forced labor were severe.

In the end, one could only see the image of a tyrant while drawing a conclusion from that.

Eiji too, still had a fresh relationship with the village; however, he wouldn't support that idea as well.

Back then, he managed to build his workshop with very little help. Iron manufacture was done in extreme heat that far exceeded 1000 Celsius.

On top of that, he had to work during midsummer in cruel conditions where his sweat would gush out and vaporized in a blink of time, and salt would emit from his body.

The moment the iron was acknowledged, Eiji continued to craft different tools with diligence.

Starting from farming tools, such as hoes and scythes, through the hand tools, like saws and chisels; regular articles, like a pair of scissors and a nail clipper, till the cooking utensils, such as kitchen knives and pots.

All of these implements applied in various fields contributed to the development of the village.

Despite making them with the intention of helping the villagers, Eiji felt proud of that.

Doing works by the sweat of one's brow and building up provisions for one's life, these were things done by all of them.

On the other hand, the landlords could be said to be only taking commissions without knowing other people's pain nor helping them. Therefore, there was no one who would consider this matter positively.

After a short while, Fernando rose up slightly and raised his hand. As expected – Eiji thought.

When it comes to a person expressing the opposite opinion, one would anticipate it to be Fernando. This guy would usually be the one to keep his rational way of thinking.

Bona nodded as she urged him to speak.

- Please wait. I'm against the idea of making the visitors into outcasts.
- What's the meaning of this? Could it be that you're siding with them?
- I don't mean that. I'm just saying that we shouldn't judge a book by its cover.
- Hmph, you're just acting like it's important.

An unpleasant feeling was felt in the air.

Because the problem arose from the outside, the cooperation of the whole village seemed to be collapsing.

Luckily, both Mike and Fernando were trusted partners.

Looks like I have to stop it. – Eiji thought.

As soon as he was about to stand up, Bona settled down the riot.

- How about you stop that, you fools!Good grief, Mike is indeed a genuine simpleton.
- As for me, I've long known that he's a fool.
- I'm telling you to stop treating me like a fool!
- Mike... sorry for that. That's right, is it fine for you not to apologize?
- I won't apologize! At that rate won't I make myself look unnecessarily miserable?
- Weren't you already like that?

Everyone laughed hearing what Mike said.

One could feel the tense atmosphere loosening up.

Eiji exhaled a sigh of relief.

Just a while ago, it was hard to breath. The air was filled with an unpleasant tension, and his hand was gradually sweating. But now, they could settle down and slowly continue with their conversation.

- Seems like everyone has calmed down thanks to Mike-san.
- Is that so? I'm not quite sure about that, but... Speaking of which, it was me who was getting angry all the time.
- I too agree with Fernando. I can understand that nobody holds the landlords in high regards; still, casting out the people from the very beginning is a quick tempered decision. If they intend to help us, wouldn't it be fine as long we have them work properly?

Fernando shared the same thought as he nodded lightly.

Perhaps Bona too supported Eiji on that point. Once again, she urged with her eyes as if saying 'continue'.

However, Mike, who was emotional and hard to convince, opposed them.

- Even if you say so, you know that those guys are planning to steal our technology?
- You've got a point. I guess it's in their intention to have us allow them to stay and participate during the production.
- Then how can you still be composed like that?
- Their condition was to let them help me during the smithing; however, it didn't mention anything about passing them the techniques.
- That might be so, but...
- I-I-In other words, we can have them help with things, such as making charcoal, mining stones, or anything similar like that.
- A brilliant idea! That wouldn't be far from possible. Philip, I must say you're quite smart.
- Still, it's far from what you are capable of.

Because of Philip's stammering habit, he usually wouldn't talk much; nevertheless, when it came to talking, he would get to the main point.

Even now, after uttering several words, Philip immediately casted his

eyes down.

However, Eiji was happy for him to participate in the conversation. At least he's reading others thoughts and supporting the approving side with no objections.

Presently, even supplying a blacksmith with resources required lots of time to be spent.

It was thanks to the help of people like Philip that Eiji was able to focus on the development apart from smithing.

— What's more, everyone is taking my job too lightly. You see—— smithing isn't just some techniques you can simply steal.

Before being accepted as a full-fledged blacksmith, it took Eiji at least 5 years. In the case of people who aren't quick-witted, it may take as long as 10 years.

Thinking that you can steal techniques by just assisting is a naive way of reasoning.

If one was to try to do it alone by the method of trial and error, it would take twice as long as when being taught.

And even the laborers, who had made the living from casting bronze, would probably not be able to grasp how iron striking works.

Despite that——

— I don't mind taking disciples as long as they are ready to help genuinely.

— Hey, hey, are you serious?

— Yes. As soon as the rumors of iron goods spread, they will be aware that only Pietro and I are capable of producing them.

— Even if it's true, you have no reason for teaching them, do you? Didn't they come here just to steal your techniques?

— Still, if they're willing to do their best, won't it be fine? The relationship with a village and people's responsibility are 2 different things. What's more, before they even become full-fledged, this village will long skip the development. In addition to the discrepancy in the level of technology, I don't think they will be able to catch up with us that easily.

— In that case, isn't it more favorable for them to be taught? They will just leave and take what they acquired at their own convenience. Perhaps, this much should be enough reason not to let them learn of

anything.

– To begin with, it wasn't us who invited those people, but rather they were sent to us. If they have enough enthusiasm, shouldn't it be fine to respond to that?

–Granny, what should we do?

Breathing out a sigh and dropping his shoulders, Mike turned his eyes toward Bona.

Eiji too, awaited the tribal chief's next words.

He believed in the goodwill of the newcomers, as well as in his remark. On the other hand, Mike, who opposed, preferred a more rational way of thinking.

That, however, lacked in human emotions.

Eiji couldn't tell which option the tribal chief would choose.

Both statements were right in their own way, therefore, the tribal chief should be the one to make the final verdict.

Eiji felt sweat in his hand.

Whatever conclusion is reached, they will have to accept without any complaint.

Closing his eyes, Eiji awaited the decision.

His body shook as he heard the sound of Bona taking a breath.

– Let's put your opinions aside for later. Just as mentioned before, we will take measures depending the outsiders' behavior.

–I guess so. It's not like I intend to teach anyone who's unsuitable, so...

– In other words, we will be observing them this time. For the beginning, it should be fine not to let them be involved directly with smithing, right?

– Yeah, I don't care.

– And not just that. I generally think it will be best not to let them become acquainted with any part of the new development. Like making alcohol, that's right, making alcohol.

– It's simple, but you're aware that there are mountains of others things more important than just that, right? Fernando, you probably just want to monopolize the alcohol.

– You bet, and if you're entrusted with that, won't your workload increase-be?

- I-It's fine to entrust me with easy works like this.
- Will it be okay with your carpentering job?

In the first place, being entrusted with helping a blacksmith is already quite an unreasonable order.

Eiji also contributed himself to the development by helping with various works. Therefore, it was necessary to cooperate as a whole village in labor, such as harvesting.

The reason why he couldn't help with harvesting was because of him continuously improving the farming tools.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that a successful harvest will be dependent on his actions.

Naturally, it is meaningless to share food supply with someone, whom you don't want to let work.

For that reason, even Eiji's remark, which was based on the pretext of decreasing the labor, allowed the space for cooperation by the outsiders.

- It seems that everyone has spoken their opinion?
- For the time being, yes.
- We have no objections (x2)
- Then, you can dissolve. First, try to understand them from closer, and don't cause any riot during the banquet.

Understood – Soon after everyone's voice was raised, the meeting was adjourned.

Chapter 46 – The Banquet (first part)

At the time it was announced that an impromptu party will be held, the women's camp that was in charge of cooking was probably fully occupied.

However, as the night deepened, they somehow managed to deliver the banquet on time.

The fire was kindled inside a hearth, and the gathering place became bright and warm.

Dishes, such as sea bass seasoned with herbs and a sauté made from a freshly killed goat were lined up on the table.

Smelling the rising aroma from the dishes, Eiji sensed a drool that was about to drip by itself from the inside of his mouth.

Unlike their daily meals, which were casual in taste, this meal was quite an extravagant one.

Recently, it had become possible for them to taste wild plants and spring vegetables, nevertheless, during winter season, they still had to content themselves with little meat. Every day, their meals included hard bread, which one had to soak in soup, otherwise their teeth wouldn't pierce through its texture.

Being invited to a luxurious lunch like this due to guest arrivals, one would consider such occasion as a blessing.

They may need to return this favor to those who weren't called this time.

An alcohol was poured into each person's cup. What everyone received was a whiskey favored by some avid drinkers.

Casually smelling the poured wine's aroma, Eiji looked around.

The 5 people who were sent from Nazioni sat on Franko's left side while creating a lump.

The 5 of them consisted of 4 men and a single woman.

Bona sat on the right side. Her seat was the seat of honor.

Among the newcomers, a single big man stood out from the rest.

His physical build was comparable with that of Philip, who was considered the biggest in the village.

His lion-like bristles and his thick pair of arms that were equivalent to a woman's waist were his characteristic features.

At least, they seemed to be thicker than Tanya's waist....

Just what kind of person is he?

Eiji was concerned about that man's eyes expression which gave off a bad feeling. The man didn't even try to conceal it.

The man's eyes glared without any restraint as he directed his sight in a manner of looking down at everyone.

His eyes met with Eiji's.

The man's light stare was filled with a threat similar to that of a beast as if telling Eiji not to avert his eyes.

It seemed as though his eyes didn't show any intention of befriending.

Or perhaps, what he wanted was to establish a master-slave relationship from the very beginning?

If it was Eiji himself, he would rather choose someone who's willing to establish a friendly and trustful relationship.

Eiji couldn't comprehend the thoughts of the man who gave off a sense of intimidation since the very beginning.

– Well then, now that everyone has received their drink, we shall start the welcoming banquet.

Bona, who was sitting at the honor seat, gave a signal.

The gathered people, who consisted of mostly men, raised their cup.

– In commemoration of the 5 newly arrived people, a toast.

– Cheers. (x3)

With each of them making individual wishes inside their own heart, everyone clinked their beer cups together while generating hard sounds.

– Eiji-san, it will be bad if you drink in excess.

– I got it, honestly. Since I can't hold much liquor, I'll just enjoy its flavor. It would be shameless, were I to get drunk here.

At that time, Tanya's belly became a little bit round.
After she learned about her pregnancy, she decided to completely stop drinking.

Both of them have decided to drink water instead.
Eiji skewered the goat meat, which was served on his plate.

As he began to chew the meat covered in a deep red sauce, he could feel its tenderness.

The food ingredient was probably processed from a young goat.
It was a bit smelly, but tasty.

- Ah, this sauté made from the goat meat is delicious, and this sauce made from wine...
- Here, try some fried cheese with wild plants.
- Were all of these made by Tanya-san?
- It was quite troublesome to prepare the dishes together with Jane-san.
- They're indeed delicious.
- Looks like it was worthy of our effort. Ah, there's some sauce on your cheek.

Once she wiped it away with her finger, she moved it toward her mouth and licked it using her deep red tongue.

- It's embarrassing.
- Sorry for that.

Smiling at him innocently, Eiji couldn't bring himself to get angry at her.

His eyes ran all over the place, at the same time feeling embarrassed.

Bona and Franko sat next to each other while tilting their cups.
Judging from the way they tasted the alcohol, it seemed that they also didn't plan to get drunk.

From time to time they would exchange some words with a calm accent; nevertheless, their eyes appeared to indicate the opposite.
One could feel the tension coming from both of them as if their skins were itching to do something.

Despite Mike and Philip getting flustered over the guests, they kept

a distance from the people so as not to become noticed.

The 5 people from Nazioni dined on their meals.

Judging from the situation, it didn't seem like their conversation will gain any progress. However, as soon as the alcohol does its job, everyone should be able to exchange some words.

Then, it went as said.

A single man gulped down his whiskey and took a deep breath, telling out straightly something that couldn't go unnoticed.

– Heh? Considering this poor and boring village located deep in the mountains, you wouldn't have expected for there to be a delicious meal like this.

– Hey, which part of it is poor and boring?

Hearing the statement of the big man with lion-styled hair, Mike bit back at him.

At first it seemed that Mike planned to go easy on them and enjoy his drink depending on their behavior, still, he probably couldn't tolerate his village being mocked.

The atmosphere of the banquet changed in an instance.

– Hmph, I just said what I think. Was the truth too harsh for you?

– You bastard. How dare an outsider like you say these bold things... guu!

– Don't become grumpy all of sudden. After all, you're just a weakling.

Mike drew closer to the distance at which he could throw himself upon the guy. However, as soon Mike was thought to be grabbed by his neck, the man lifted him.

His physical strength was unbelievable.

That man lifted a man single-handedly, on top of that, with the arm stretched out.

It was probably difficult to breath, having one's neck grabbed.

Mike had his face distorted while delivering his sharp kicks to the man. Nonetheless, he wouldn't flinch.

The man was standing up with a calm expression.

Eiji rose up hurriedly and rushed over.

Why isn't Franko trying to stop them? – He thought.

Franko, who has never had to deal with a situation like this in his whole career, stood next to the man while getting irritated.

- Cease your actions and let him go!
- Hey hey, he was the one looking for a fight.
- Look who was the first to instigate this fight!
- It seems that you too, plan to disobey me. I'm the son of the ruler, you know.
- What does it have to do in a situation like this? If you want to stay at this village, you better follow this place's rules!
- Dante.^[1]
- Damn, got it.

At Franko's words, Dante smacked his lips and released his hand. Once he did, Mike fell with a thud on the ground.

Because of his neck being tightened in an upward position, Mike's face was white from hypoxia.

His neck was stinging, and there was a red, hand-shaped mark on it.

Despite that, Mike furrowed his eyebrows and pointed his sharp eyes at Dante.

Eiji too, looked at Dante with sharp eyes, which was not common for his usually gentle attitude.

A man like this is supposed to stay here? – He thought.

There was no way to let the man do as he pleases from now on.

At least, there was no telling what will happen, were they to let him go on a rampage like this time.

- You, what's your name?
- You ought to introduce yourself first.
- Hmph, I'm Dante, the man who will become the next ruler of Nazioni.
- My name is Eiji. I'm in charge of teaching you guys smithing from now on.
- You too, are a cheeky one, ain't you? —Pay me respect and bow down!

Dante swung downward trying to pin down Eiji's head against his own will.

They slapped each other's hand powerfully.

If the man was to get serious, he would probably have no problem in dealing with Eiji.

—A brief moment.

Eiji moved instantly.

Using his left hand he grabbed Dante's wrist and inserted his right hand under the man's armpit.

Dante's body folded up. As soon as Eiji's foot pressed firmly against the ground, he threw Dante up.

It was a splendid shoulder throw.

Dante's big body floated in the air with a violent force.

Drawing a beautiful arc, Dante was dashed onto the floor.

Together with an unbelievably huge shock, the floor groaned, making the gathering place shake.

Dante probably wouldn't expect such a turn of events as he didn't assume a defensive stance. It seemed that he was unable to stand up quickly.

After receiving the blow, Dante became agitated.

Was it the first time for him to experience something like this? His eyes turned monochrome as he became shocked.

He looked down at Dante.

Eiji wouldn't let his guard down as he prepared his posture so as to act immediately in case he will be assaulted again.

After that Eiji said.

— Please choose more wisely whom you want to pick a fight with, but bear in mind that I'm in charge of teaching you. For this, whatever your social status is, I won't forgive that haughtiness of yours even if you beg me to teach you.

— Y- You...!

— Franko-san, how about you tell this guy to go back? It would be troublesome to have someone who's unwilling to cooperate.

Turning his head around, Eiji directed his sight toward Franko who was at the seat of honor.^[2]

However, despite witnessing this sort of situation, Franko shook his head sideways.

– No, I'll teach him some manners. There's no excuse for ruining this banquet that was hosted thanks to everyone's effort. I'll excuse myself and Dante for a moment. So everyone, please get along.

– Franko!

– Be silent!

It was a sharp voice of reprimand.

Dante, who was, till now, assuming importance with his impudent attitude, also noticed his misbehavior and nodded while saying 'Got it'.

Can a person with such attitude reflect on their own behavior? – He thought.

Eiji had the feeling that he witnessed Franko's unexpected side.

He was indeed a capable person, and he would look for solutions that don't lead to a situation like this one.

Nevertheless, his capability was probably not just limited to that.

It seemed that Dante quickly recovered after being thrown down.

Once he managed to stand up, Franko took him along and left the place of gathering.

As soon they reached the front of the door, Dante stopped.

Turning around, he glared at Eiji.

– Hey, you. Don't think that you've won.

– I don't think it's the matter of winning or losing.

You could feel an almost scary killing intent emanating from him.

His sense of intimidation made a chill run through Eiji's spine. It was the same fear as the one he had when facing the wolves.

I guess the trick with shoulder throwing won't work a second time. – Eiji thought.

Notes

1. Franko again.
2. It seems that there are 2 seats of honor.

Chapter 47 – The Banquet (latter part)

After both Franko and Dante had left, Mike adjusted his breath and approached Eiji.

His face, which was filled with resentment a while ago, cleared up while turning into a refreshed one.

- It's a nice feeling.
- But in exchange, it was dangerous for a moment....
- I don't care. At the time something happens, it won't be solely my problem. That's because nobody in this village will stay calm.

Mike spoke while making a glare radiating with light.

Just like he stated boldly, the villagers' attitude will probably turn hostile against the outsiders.

And there was no doubt that the rumor of today's outburst will spread inside the village.

Things have become quite troublesome – Eiji thought as he wanted to scratch his head.

There was no need to become hostile from the very beginning.

It would be a different story were they to part today without getting acquainted, however, from now on, they'll be forced to face each other.

Despite him intending to get along with the newcomers, the result turned opposite to his expectations with someone finally losing their patience.

Putting aside Eiji, who began to worry about what could have gone wrong, Mike placed his hand on Eiji's shoulder.

- Ain't you amazing? I don't know what that technique was, but you were able to deal with that guy pretty well.
- That's because I used to practice Judo. I haven't done it for quite a long time, but it seems that my body still remembers the moves.

- Judo?
- If it's the art of shooting with the bow, it's called Yumi-dou. In this case, it's the name of the technique where you throw your opponent over your shoulder and restrict him.
- So you were practicing something like that? I wonder if it wasn't just a coincidence.

It was difficult to explain the principles of Judo in a society where there were no combat skills.

However, if the person is a hunter, it's possible for him to learn bow techniques.

For instance, after explaining what he did was, to Mike, he seemed to be in a great admiration.

Like this? – Mike said while mimicking Eiji's movements.

In the first place, it was probably thanks to Eiji's reflexes that his movements were able to follow in Judo.

Perhaps it's what people could refer to as a 'jack of all trades, master of none'

It might have been simply the body management^[1] that Eiji was captivated with.

Despite that, he was taken by surprise.

Just the thought of letting someone aim for that was fearsome; nevertheless, it was different in case of Mike, who was always present in Eiji's surrounding, and who held no particular grudge against humans.

- This time, please teach me how it works.
- We need a soft ground, or you'll get injured.
- There should be no problem if we use the lawn, right?

Rather it would be more preferable – Eiji agreed.

Still, Mike was now cheerful, which didn't make him look like the same irritated person from a while ago.

- Are you really okay?

Seeing the smiling Mike, who gulped down whiskey and began to eat, Jane asked worrisomely after arriving at the banquet.

Ah, indeed she's a good wife. It's very like of Jane to look after and worry about her husband. – He thought.

Tanya too, was probably worried about Eiji the moment he was standing in the center of the conflict.

Looking next to his seat, there was Tanya sitting with a blank expression.

Once Eiji raised his hand and nodded lightly, Tanya replied back as she breathed out a sigh of relief.

– Yeah, Jane. I'm fit and sound thanks to Eiji. Sorry for making you worry.

– Is that so? I'm relieved. Then, I guess you ought to learn how to hold back your temper.

– Aah....?

Jane's face, which was resembling that of a loving mother, immediately turned into a furious expression.

It was scary. Eiji couldn't understand what was going on; nevertheless, he felt that it was better to leave the place at once.

Despite him quickly leaving the scene behind, he couldn't tell what will happen to Mike, who was still glared with sharp eyes by Jane.

– It might be different in case of people in this village, but don't bring us the shame in front of the guests! You octopus blockhead! Die!

– Fuguah! Hebuu! Obufu!

Using her fist in a gouging manner, Jane sank it into Mike's stomach three times as blunt sounds generated.

Bang, bang – together with the heavy sounds, Mike's body bent into a 'K' shaped latter.

Once she had entwined her arms around Mike's neck, she threw him down using his neck as a support.

– Ah, it's a hip wheel.

Right after Eiji muttered the name of the technique, Jane tressed on Mike with her boots, whose body was knocked against the ground from the side of his back.

It was just like a combo movement, in which there was no time for the person to catch their breath.

Receiving the final artistic blow, it seemed that Mike sustained even more damage than from Dante.

- Today, why don't you abstain from eating and drinking as a form of repentance?
- Wifey, that's barbarous.
- Silence!
- You're cruel, way too cruel.
- Do you want to taste my blows one more time?

Mike, who was all worn-out, raised a pathetic voice, but Jane didn't seem to show him any mercy.

Raising both of her hands, she swung Mike around with his neck.

Once Mike was made to sit, cups and plates were put away from the table.

Philip and Fernando asked for Mike's condition and tried to console him, still, none of them would protect him, as they were completely overcome with fear.

How should one describe it? It was a kind of miserable thing to happen during a feast that was prepared with lots of efforts.

However, it might have been thanks to Jane and Mike that the atmosphere changed, as the banquet calmed down after that.

Perhaps, the exit of Franko and the man with an intimidating air, Dante, will bring a positive change on the latter person.

The other newcomers, who had been out of attention, didn't move as if being frozen. Nevertheless, they slowly began to reach out their hands toward the food and alcohol.

And then, a single person drew near Eiji's seat.

It was a girl with a small build.

- My name is Katharina. I'm sorry for the troubles caused by Dante!
- It's Eiji. I too apologize for causing a scene during this welcome party that was prepared with everyone's efforts.
- Eiji-san, please treat me well from now on!

Katharina bowed down vigorously.

Once she raised her head back, she smiled bashfully.

It was a short-haired girl that gave out the impression of being

energetic.

Katharina looked up at Eiji with her big and round eyes radiating with light.

Indeed, she has a cuteness of a squirrel. I wonder if she's younger than Tanya. – He thought.

Eiji's eyes run quickly over Katharina's whole body.

Her woolen sweater, which was dyed in indigo, stretched over her pair of breasts, creating bulges at the same time.

Eiji quickly averted his eyes.

He is a man who managed to keep his common sense while living under the same roof with a single woman for three months. Therefore, he wouldn't be moved by this much.

She probably used her hands a lot, as they looked a bit rough indicating that she possessed a pair of laborer's hands.

Eiji was pleased that there was finally someone willing to exchange a conversation.

At least, he wanted to establish new contacts and improve their cooperation even if it's a little.

– The dishes here are truly delicious. Not even in Nazioni have I eaten something like this.

– It was made by my wife and the woman just now. If by any chance, Katharina-san takes an interest in them, how about talking with each other about various dishes? I too, am curious about Nazioni's cuisine.

– I want to know as well! Even though the ingredients ain't much different, the way you prepared the sauce and cheese was done really skillfully.

– Isn't Nazioni's cooking quite similar to the one here?

– That's right. We usually have wheat gruel, vegetable soup, river and ocean's fishes, and some wild plants during this season.

– Fishes? Makes me want to eat some.

Hearing the sudden mention about fishes, Eiji felt a strong urge to try them.

Since his arrival in this village, Eiji's dream of tasting Japanese cuisine was completely cut off.

He wanted to eat some rice, as well as Miso soup using the soy sauce.

However much he would pray, there was nobody on this island that had rice and soybeans.

Were he able to eat some sashimi, he would be thankful.

Or at least, if this place wasn't located deep in the mountains.

Someday, I'll set out on a trip. Let's leave this rocky area and move to some village near the waters. – Eiji thought.

If there's a chance for such a cultural exchange, he will declare his wish for participation even if he has to protest.

Recalling back the dishes from his hometown, Eiji noticed Katharina staring at him silently.

It appears that his mind was completely wandering.

- Sorry, I was overthinking a bit.
- That's fine.
- Katharina-san, what were you doing in the city?
- I was in charge of dyeing.
- You mean like dyeing clothes?
- Yes. And then, on a certain day, a thing called soap was introduced, improving my dyeing job immediately. It made me wonder what kind of person the inventor must be. I was told before coming here that the inventor of the soap plans to teach me new skills, so obviously, I agreed!

A story came from quite an unexpected place.

Looks like a large amount of soap was brought to Nazioni.

However, Eiji wouldn't have expected for it to be used for dyeing clothes as well as washing one's body.

If one considers it thoroughly, detergents are also used in laundry, so it's reasonable for the soap to be used for removing stains.

Still, her expression looked very pleased.

Katharina's face was growing red from the excitement.

It seemed that at least this person might become a worthy disciple – Eiji thought.</p>

Notes

1. also known as Tai sabaki. For more info:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tai_sabaki

Chapter 47.5 – After the Banquet

It was a dark and small room.

The room had undergone the minimum amount of repairs; nevertheless, sights of damage could be seen here and there, which was clearly due to people inhabiting this place.

Starting from Dante, the party of disciples from the city of Nazioni were designated to a house.

Everyone's rooms were extremely confined.

The light coming from a kindled fireplace slightly illuminated the corners of the room.

Franko and Dante sat around the fireplace.

– Dante, I brought some food. Won't you eat?

– Ah, thanks.

Franko filled his mouth with the wine.

The abundant fragrance of grapes and the faint sweetness mixed with bitterness unfolded inside his mouth.

This year's summer was hot.

Still, the taste coming from the grapes was quite concentrated.

Receiving his plate, Dante began to eat in silence.

–It's delicious, isn't it?

– It's a splendid food. To think that a taste like this could be acquired depending on the maker's skill even though the raw materials aren't much different in themselves.

– I thought that the soup's astringency was much stronger, and therefore would be similarly bitter, but...

– Being able to eat such cooking makes you want to stay here instead of going to other villages for an inspection.

– Even though you would always be treated to a feast, isn't your stomach content?

– I ride on a horse every day, so there's no time for me to gain weight.

Franko's body, which was twice as big as that of an average person,

would probably require a proportional amount of nutrients. The dishes that he brought disappeared one after another inside his mouth, and soon after, the plates became clean. Franko observed Dante's appearance with his calm eyes.

- Dante, you lost your temper, didn't you?
- I'm sorry for that.

Dante's head lowered slightly.

The impudent attitude he showed during the banquet was an uncommon thing to happen.

Considering that, he's quite a miserable guy. – Franko thought. Dante certainly wasn't a fool.

If he was given a hint, he would obediently follow. That's why he was quite an adult.

Franko concluded that the reason why he behaved like that during the banquet was due to his personality, which he had shaped in his surroundings.

Dante was the third son born from the relationship between Nazioni's ruler and his concubine.

However, what made Dante unhappy was that his father, Nazioni, actually loved his mother instead of him.

Soon after Dante's birth, his mother died from puerperal fever, and Nazioni lost interest in his son.

He had older brothers, who were next in succession.

As well as Dante, his older brothers possessed a monstrous strength, however, unlike Dante, they received a minimum amount of discipline which made them less likely to cause any trouble.

On the other hand, Dante, who was released free, continued to make pranks in order to catch his parent's attention as he was reaching the state of puberty.

Nevertheless, oppositely, his actions made him be kept at a distance.

Abusing his status as the ruler's son, he wouldn't quit pretending to be other people's boss.

As a result, he was treated as a nuisance, making him unable to stay in the city.

Dante had lots of flaws, still, Franko couldn't bring himself to dislike Dante as he didn't feel any malice coming from the man.

Dante's habit of snapping at others was just like that of a dog.

Unless he receives proper discipline, he will continue to snap at others.

– Hey, Franko.

– What?

– If I manage to produce a result in this village, you will honestly recommend me as the next successor, won't you?

– That would be so. I promise you that.

– Understood, I believe you.

– In that case, tomorrow you're going to properly apologize for your actions.

– Yeah, losing my temper was unintentional. I wonder if apologizing will do....

Under normal circumstances, it wouldn't be possible for Dante's succession to come.

However, if someone like Franko, who administrated internal affairs single-handedly as the tax collector, was to strongly recommend Dante, the power balance would greatly shift.

That's because, if it hadn't been for Franko, their territory would never have been established.

The Nazioni clan was known to excel in physical build and display a strength that was second to none on the battlefield; however, there was a problem in the fact that they weren't acquainted with business.

Well, it should be fine if he tries to strive at least – he thought.

There are a lot of problems in Dante's way of dealing with things that makes negotiations not go as smooth as he wishes.

If he fails, he will squander the chance of gaining cooperation. On the other hand, if he succeeds, he will be able to yield results and make himself advance easily once he becomes the next ruler.

At the same time, Dante's brothers, who saw him as a thorn in their side, sent him to the village so as to create a pretext to drive him away. Even if they would fail to do so, his brothers were self-

confident in walking around problems without sustaining any damage.

- That attitude of yours will be no good if you want to gain any achievements here. That's why, you have to learn how to show respect. Besides, we went through the troubles to find a place like this where nobody knows of your reputation in the city. It may be difficult to make the first impression, but do your best, okay?
- Yeah. Since you're the only one who called out to me with the intention of helping, I'll answer to your expectation.
- Well, don't force yourself. It's fine if you progress step by step.

Still, how much Dante will manage to learn from Eiji remained a greatly doubtful question.

There was a need to give some warning to the other 4 people as well.

Franko drank his ale slowly.

The banquet was probably still ongoing.

Were they able to melt into the company? – While considering asking them about that later, Franko proceeded to eat his food.

Since then, quite some time had passed, and Katharina returned. Only Katharina received a separate house under the pretext of being a girl.

It was a countermeasure against deliberately creating any type of turmoil.

Her white skin was dyed deep red from the alcohol, and was seen even in the dark.

Judging from her appearance, she was quite pleased.

Once Franko noticed Katharina, he called out to her.

- Welcome back. Was the banquet enjoyable?
- Franko-san. Yes, Master Eiji, as well as his wife, Tanya-san, treated me well. It seems that we will be able to get along from now on.

- I'm glad to hear that. You could say that it was worth it to bring you with me.
- I'm truly grateful for that.
- What? You only happened to do what I was wishing for.

Seeing how Katharina bowed down vigorously, Franko raised up his hands as if holding her back.

It seemed that she would always bow down if there was nobody minding her.

It wasn't something to be thanked to such an extent.

Right now, she hasn't managed to produce any results yet, but once she has acquired new skills, she intended to return Franko's favor manifold.

If Dante's forte was pushing things, then Katharina's was using a frontal attack.

Her personality, which was full of exceptional curiosity, zealousness, and energy toward new skills, should certainly be the factor in becoming a desirable type of laborer.

Since she had been the fastest in establishing new interactions, it didn't seem that there would be any confusion in her eyes.

The only worry Franko had was whether she could settle down like that in Siena, Nevertheless, his anxiety seemed to be needless, or so he thought.

This time, the people that were chosen to be brought to Siena were the ones that couldn't deny his request and had various circumstances to go back.

There was no doubt that Katharina showed an unusual curiosity for smithing, but it wasn't strong enough to make her want to stay in Siena.

- Katharina, I have a small request for you.
- What it is? I intend to do the utmost, since you have already granted me the wish.
- It isn't anything big. I want you to look after Dante. Of course, you might find it unmanageable.
- Dante-san?
- Yeah. That guy has caused nothing but problems today.

Franko understood that there was a slight concern appearing on her face.

Her complexion turned pale at once.

Katharina would always express her feelings vigorously and with all her might, still, her personality wasn't a strong willed one.

She was probably not on good terms with the violent Dante.

No, the ones who could probably talk back to him in this village were the tribal chief, Bona, and the woman called Jane.

While Franko was wandering in his thoughts, Katharina seemed to be worried.

Tightening her expression, she bowed down.

- Understood. I, Katharina, will support him with all my power!
- No, it should be fine not to exaggerate. Just do as much as you can.
- Yes, I'll do as much as I can and support him with all my power!
- Ah, yeah... please do so.....fuhaha.
- Franko-san?

Good grief, she's indeed a girl with changeable attitude.

Franko tried to suppress his gushing joy.

Despite him trying to indicate with his eyes that nothing happened, he couldn't suppress his laugh. A suspicious expression appeared on Katharina's face.

Till now, he has been observing many people through his duty of collecting taxes.

Even if one was to work similarly hard, there still was a distinction between the successful type of people and those who had no hope of getting ahead.

Katharina was certainly the successful type as she possessed a natural charm to attract people.

One would want to support her unconsciously.

Looks like I can look forward to the situation from now on – Franko thought.

- You guys are late.
- Ah, Franko-sama.
- I apologize.

It seemed that the remaining 3 men were thoroughly drunk. Siena's alcohol was far more delicious than those they would usually drink. On top of that, they made people get drunk easier. If one was to drink it at the same pace as usual, it couldn't be helped for that person to drink themselves unconscious.

However, the early spring night was chilly. Being made to wait, Franko wanted to complain.

- Then, how was it? Did you manage to get along?
- Erm, about that...
- We're still working hard on that.
- Well, please do your best.

All these men were the ones who couldn't afford to pay their taxes. Instead of talking, they were sent on an errand to this village; therefore, they had to obey.

These type of people were the easiest human resources to be used.

- You guys understand your job, right?
- Y-Yes.
- No failures will be accepted.
- We will engrave that on our hearts.
- I see, then go.
- Yes.

Bowing down repeatedly, the men entered their house as if running away. Seeing that, Franko sighed with his nose.

If Katharina was a naturally born laborer, then those guys were good-for-nothing ones.

They wouldn't try to work positively, and would only complain, double as much as a usual person.

Saying that, they also didn't have the guts to throw everything away and degrade themselves into thieves.

However, because of that, there was another use for them. At least, let's try to exploit them – is what he thought.

Franko watched the scenery of Siena during the night. Only the surroundings of the tribal chief's house were illuminated by the fire.

Right now, in front of him, in the darkness, there was the newly built barn, watermill, and the workshop.

—This village is developing way too fast.

As soon as he noticed, these words came out from his mouth. One after another, brand new things were developed while overshadowing this period's common knowledge.

Seeing how people's lives become abundant thanks to the introduction of new technologies was a delightful thing.

However, the truth is that one couldn't overlook the development occurring in a single village.

That's because it can greatly impact the power balance.

Should we steal their technology? Make them promulgate it? Or perhaps, force it to become obsolete?

There were many available counterplans.

Nevertheless, it was still too early to take action.

The reason why Franko brought Dante and Katharina was because he couldn't leave the thing as it is.

If this proves to be unsuccessful, we will probably have to take more forceful measures.

While predicting various future possibilities, Franko thought.

—— There's a need to be prepared.

Chapter 48 – Mining (first part)

The next morning after the banquet. While having a meal, Eiji was able to ask more details regarding the city of Nazioni from Tanya. What he had for breakfast was the baked bread from last evening and some reheated leftovers.

On their dining table, there was a small amount of pickled food, fresh vegetables, and wild plants. In addition to that, a simple salad mixed with some seasoning-related ingredients, such as cider vinegar, olive, and salt, was made.

– I see. The ruler has 3 sons, and Dante, who came to this village, is his third son. Also, for the time being, it doesn't look like he's next in line for the throne.

– That's right. He has aspired to become one since his childhood, but despite him getting older, Dante wouldn't change that childish way of thinking. The city won't disobey him, but at the same time, they don't see him as their partner. It seems that they considered him as a nuisance and drove him off here.

– I remember Katharina telling me that she used to dye?

– It appears that she made a living from dyeing wool. She didn't state it clearly, but I wonder if she's divorced.

– Ah, is that so?

– Perhaps it is, but for some reason, she doesn't give an impression of having dealt with men, or so you could say....

– Still, to think that you were able to collect this much information within a single day.

– I exchanged some social conversation back when I was cooking in preparation for the banquet. It was at that time that I learned various things.

Her ability to gather information was terrifying.

Eiji had heard about gathering information from idle gossips inside a village, but it seemed like it wasn't a lie.

Having experienced various aspects of that till now, Eiji felt the fearsome nature coming from idle gossips.

The time when he presented the ring to Tanya spread inside the

village within the same night.

They would be congratulated and teased by the villagers.

Even when he introduced the Chinese-styled iron pot, orders for it poured in from the housewives throughout the whole village. After that, he wouldn't be able to make anything else besides the pot for a while.

Because it's said that the bad rumors are easy to be spread, Eiji engraved that fact into his heart.

– Eiji-san, what are your plans for today?

– First, I'll take the newcomers for ore mining, and then, I'll probably go make a round inside the village to see how the development is progressing.

– First fields, then a watermill, and the barn....When do you intend to return?

– I would like to return around the time the rooster crows.

Besides the sundial, the crow of a rooster could also serve as the replacement for measuring time.

The rooster crows three times a day, and the interval between each crow is fixed.

At Eiji's words which were usually informing of his late return, Tanya face turned gloomy. Nevertheless, there were things that one had to do piling up.

Pietro wasn't ready to take care of jobs yet, therefore, Eiji had to do them by himself.

What's more, it's said that there's usually a god residing in one's actual place.^[1]

Eiji didn't think about just creating and leaving his items as they are, but also inquiring the actual users for opinions so as to use them for reference.

Seeing Tanya, who was burdened, Eiji thought about wanting to compensate her.

– Please do your best in your job.

– Tanya-san too, please don't force yourself. You need to consider the baby as well.

– Yes, I'll have Jane-san assist me.

Eiji gently brushed her belly; he could understand that her stomach has swelled a little bit in comparison with before.

Luckily, it seemed that her morning sickness weakened. Despite so, Eiji tried to make her rest to the extent that one could say he was overprotective.

Since this village had no medical equipment, he couldn't allow himself to ease up even for a moment.

Delivering the child will take place in their house instead of an infirmary, but because they were living together with their livestock, it meant that feces and urine were present as well.

In this village the mortality during the time of birth is unusually high.

Eiji believed that the cause of this was germs and bacteria.

Because of that, there was a need to separate the livestock and clean the inside of the house as fast as possible even if it was to gain a single day.

He also planned to gradually advance with the refining properties of the disinfectant alcohol, and have it tried out on other pregnant women during their birth delivery.

– Even if it's for the sake of the baby, Eiji-san, you too shouldn't force yourself.

– I'm off.

I need to walk around smoothly in order not to put any more stress on her. – He thought.

Today, it was the visitor's first experience at the work.

So as not to cause any problems, they had to be in high spirits.

Just like the maxim 'strike while the iron is hot', making first impression is always considered as important.

In front of the furnace that had been designated by Eiji as the meeting spot, all the members, together with Pietro, gathered.

It was still the time in which the sun hadn't risen yet.

As expected, they had no intention of arriving late. – He thought.

Looking out over the members' faces, they didn't appear to be fully awake.

Pietro was blinking with his eyes. He was probably still sleepy due to his growth period.

Dante, on the other hand, didn't try to hide his yawning; nevertheless, his personal appearance looked neat which would indicate that he was ready.

The only one who was full of spirit was Katharina, as her eyes were brightly shining like that found in a boy.

- Everyone, good morning.
- Good morning (x2)
- Sup
- You guys don't seem to be energetic, do you? One more time.
Good morning.
- Good morning!!! (x2)

Their greetings were mixed with mumbling similar to that of school students, however, Eiji made them repeat.

For instance, even if it is some son of a ruler, at least it's better to have that person greet properly and loudly.

The world surrounding a blacksmith is harsh.

Numerous old customs among blacksmiths were the reason why many of them weren't succeeded.

Still, if one was to properly learn about these customs in-depth, they could learn how to think properly.

Eiji wanted them to grow up to the extent of not becoming a bother.

- It seems that everyone has gathered, but have you guys brought the luggage with you?
- Yes! We have pickaxes and shovels inside the wheelbarrow, so we are thoroughly prepared!
- Why are these tools made from bronze? Don't you have the iron ones?
- Unfortunately, because of your sudden arrival, we don't have enough to supply all the members with. Bear with that. What's more, there's a reason for that.

Eiji made a wry smile.

Indeed, he should have made some more pickaxes. Since only he and Pietro were in charge of ore mining, Eiji decided to postpone that matter.

He wouldn't have expected for the bill to come due at such a time.

- Yes, but Eiji-san, why is it so?
- That's right. I know that you might complain once you put them in practice, but, if I were to say it bluntly, it's for the sake of grasping the secret of success behind smithing, or so you could say.
- So we are already at that point?!
- Hmph, are you going to teach us that fast? Indeed, it's suspicious.

When a pickaxe becomes worn-out, only its tip is replaced, so there's no need to make a new one.

In the first place, were they to tell him ahead, Eiji would probably have done the necessary preparations, however, as expected, there was no way to make the tools right after yesterday.

And because Eiji had other things to do, he decided to scrape up together the bronze-made pickaxes that were lying inside the shared storage house for the time being.

The existing iron-made ones were being used for land reclamation right now.

Staring lightly at Dante, who was filled with skepticism, Eiji pulled himself together.

- Well then, I might be rushing you, but from now on I'll guide everyone to the workplace.
- Yay! I'm looking forward to it.
- I wonder if it's close.
- It takes around one hour by walking.
- One hour!?

Pushing the wheelbarrow with a clattering sound, they advanced forward. Because the way wasn't paved, it was highly uneven. It wouldn't be half as bad in case of short trips; nevertheless, if it's a long one, it will certainly have an impact on their whole body.

Still, if one was to consider shouldering such luggage, this would be far better.

But only until a rain appears.

Looking up at the sky, Eiji saw a clear blue sky above.

That was a good omen.

Only, the weather couldn't be predicted.

And it was a suitable weather for their first job.

They walked through the forest.

Eiji led the group while clearing away the bushes in front of him using a nata.

The plants grew prominently thick.

From the leaves that were cut off, a scent of the deep forest lifted into the air.

clatter clatter – the wheelbarrow that kept following produced a clamorous sound.

We will need to make a transportation road from now on, probably.

– He thought.

Inside villages, there were usually candidates for laying roads. Still, if one was to point out which road surface was worse, it would definitely be this side.

The wheelbarrow bounced due to tree roots and rocks.

- Everyone, please follow me slowly and fast, okay?
- Ehh, but what Eiji-san says contradicts itself.
- It might be unreasonable, but...
- If you have time to complain, please watch and learn from Pietro. Decisively choose the paths that are in good condition, and move swiftly.
- But this is our first time.

Everyone seemed to be tired from just the attempt of reaching the destination.

However, in the end, they somehow managed to reach the place within the morning time.

Later, an earnest job of mining will be awaiting them. A job that will prove to be tough.

Notes

1. Not sure what the author was trying to imply. Perhaps, Eiji wanted to say that he shouldn't be reckless in his action, like by leaving things to Pietro.

Chapter 49 – Mining (middle part 1)

The place for mining was a cliff where a landslide had taken place. In the past, Eiji had been guided by Philip to a place where they had to walk from one mountain to another.

Gaps in the cliff were completely exposed due to the landslide. Till its inside, one could notice the sight of magnetite.

Iron is one of the most numerous kinds of ore that appears on the surface.

Its distribution is worldwide.

However, if one is to describe iron ore, there are several type of them.

Among them, magnetite is the type that is easiest to apply in smithing.

Were it to be a low quality version of hematite, the cost performance ratio would probably be far cheaper than now.

It probably wasn't easy to refine a good-quality iron.

Being able to collect magnetite is indeed a good fortune.

There was no end to Eiji's gratitude for Philip, who brought him to this place upon knowing every nook and corner of all the mountains.

Eiji and there rest lined up in front of the cliff. With each of them holding a pickaxe, they looked up at the cliff.

It was almost 6-7 meters in height.

The cliff was expanding horizontally; nevertheless, there was a single vertically ray-shaped spot that cut into the mountain. That was where ores had been excavated till now.

He would drop the ores together with the soil from above and carry them out on a wheelbarrow.

The top of the cliff was going toward the vertical ray-shaped spot while creating steps that acted as a foothold under the place of mining.

- Well then, we will begin shortly. Is every one of you holding a pickaxe?
- Yeah, I'm going to show you my strength.
- We are ready!
- Then, I'll have you dig here for the ores that contain iron needed for smithing. Still, I've got a single piece of advice for you: excavate the ones from above first, so as not to injure yourself.
- What's the deal? Won't it be faster to dig the ores directly?
- You see, I said that because it's meant to prevent them from falling.

Why do we have to use such a sluggish method? – At Dante who had question marks appearing above his head, Eiji smiled wryly. There was a single reason for that.

Katharina understood the meaning and feeling behind Eiji's words well.

– To begin with, the foundation here is loosened, causing landslides in this place. That however, formed a place where we could find iron ores. Because there's a fear that we might be trapped under the soil if anyone of us make a single mistake, let's start with digging from the top.

Mining ore is generally divides into two categories: open air mining and cave mining.

Open air mining is safe in terms of cave-in incidents, still, it requires lots of effort to dig to the spot that has a vein of ore.

What's more, there's one negative aspect of doing so, which is environmental destruction caused by thoroughly excavating the ground from the surface.

However, the reason why Eiji was so particular about the open air mining till now was due to the fact that it won't contribute to one's loss of life.

Eiji's only plan was to make use of the environment.

If they strip down the upper part of the cliff to its part below, it will take them far less time to dig ores rather than usually doing it on the ground.

This procedure used to be one of the mining methods applied in

practice.

- Damn, I was also thinking that way.
- Your power will come handy for the part that takes lots of time, so I have expectations in you.
- O-Oh, leave it to me.

Was he perhaps not used to being praised? Dante rubbed beneath his nose as if feeling bashful.

After that, he would nervously scratch his head while putting a broad grin on his face.

They might be unexpectedly obedient people – Eiji thought.

What was worthy of praise was their pure heart, but on the other hand, their weak point was the fact that they were still brats.

They somehow managed to grow up without even knowing what the gentle side of human nature is, so they will probably be fine that way.

Provided that Eiji treats them adequately, it might be possible for them to be lively during their work.

By working every day to the fullest in the sweat of one's brow, one can notice the joy of what one does.

And when it comes to that, won't they grow into fine humans with the presence of mind?

As for today, there seemed to be some anxiety about their growth, but, a small light of hope was visible.

However it will turn out, they are people whom Eiji will come face to face with from now on.

For someone who's in a superior position, believing in one's subordinates is the only thing they can do.

All the members climbed onto the top of the cliff and dug up the ground with their pickaxes.

Raising their pickaxes overhead, they swung down as if making their tools' weight bite into the soil directly.

stab – the end of their pickaxes pierced into the ground.

A shock ran not just through their hands but also their elbows and shoulders.

Doing it in a manner of inserting the end of the pickaxe with the

principle of a lever, lumps of earth rose up and crumbled. Once they repeated that procedure several times, they kicked down the content toward the bottom of the cliff. It was a repetition of a simple work.

- Damn, indeed, it's solid.
- So h-hard~. Uff~, so heavy—.
- Yo ho. It's the matter of getting the knack. Once you become used to it, you will be able to perform it easily.

Eiji could understand Dante's feelings well, as he clicked his tongue while looking at his hands.

Within a short amount of time, small blisters appeared on his hands. What's more, since this was their first time mining, it might have caused them a great trouble. Eiji could grasp what Katharina was feeling as well.

He handed her the lightest and shortest type of pickaxe, but regardless of that, it still was probably putting her under a great burden.

However, swinging with a pickaxe was actually part of smithing too. Despite saying that she's a girl, as long one doesn't possess the minimum strength needed for smithing, that person won't be able to craft anything good.

What is almost common between smithing and mining is that they both require the person to perform the action of swinging downward with something heavy.

Therefore, all the similar muscles, like the ones from the back to the shoulders, and the ones in arms, are used.

Rather than having them swing with a hammer, hold a pair of fire tongs, or forge iron every day from now on, first, there was a need for them to build up some body mass.

Among those who were holding a pickaxe, Pietro was the one who performed the best.

What's more, he was the one who had been doing most of mining-related tasks as a form of observational study.

Due to Pietro's growing period, his body outline was still thin, however, he was quicker and smarter in his actions than the rest.

Eiji too understood that as they had been going together for mining numerous of times in the past half of a year.

Pietro's way of using the pickaxe was exceptionally skillful.

He wasn't applying that much of power, still, it was certain that his pickaxe sank deeper into the ground.

On top of that, Pietro skillfully made use of his weight when digging up, which made it more difficult for him to get tired.

In addition to him working proficiently, the pickaxe probably won't wear out quickly.

Those who know how to operate a tool, and not just a pickaxe, are the ones that can use them the longest.

Their sights gathered naturally.

Both Dante and Katharina watched how Pietro was being familiar with his work. They tried to learn while asking to themselves what they were lacking.

And then, Pietro himself probably noticed their glances.

Once he stopped moving his hands, his face flushed red as if feeling a little bit shy. Nevertheless, after he made a single cough, Pietro began instructing Katharina.

– Hey, Katharina-san. It will be better if you grip the handle a bit shorter. What's more, you're holding it too tight, so loosen a bit your grip.

– L-Like this?

– That's right, that's right. Because we will be continuing our works till the sun sets, we ought to do it skillfully, otherwise it will be troublesome.

– T-That's right. We can only do this till the evening...

– Hey, teach me too.

– Dante-san, you're only using your arms. On top of that, you're putting too much of your strength into it. It's better for you to use your whole body more. And then, there's a problem in how you operate the tip of the pickaxe. Rather than knocking it against the ground, you should use it with the sense of piercing in your mind.

Pietro, who was the youngest among them, boldly took the initiative of teaching the pupils how to properly use the pickaxe.

Dante too, nodded toward Pietro's words as he checked out his piece of advice by using the method of trial and error. On the other hand, Pietro continued to swing while pointing out their mistakes from time to time.

Age doesn't matter as long one possesses the proper skills that can be taught.

Of course, they might feel like being taught by a junior; nonetheless, Pietro was actually doing a magnificent job of instructing them.

Not boasting with the skills he possesses, he taught them politely with lots of pride.

It was the appearance of a splendid senior apprentice.

Pietro grew up favorably, even though half year ago Eiji couldn't tell what would become of his disciple.

Seeing his growth, Eiji felt a hot sensation gushing from the inside of his chest.

Till now, Pietro had been pouring all his heart into his duty as a subordinate while gaining experience with his body. Thanks to that, he was now able to convey what he had learned.

It was probably still not enough to teach him smithing-related skills, however, his time as an apprentice will remarkably reduce. As soon that happens, he will be able to teach others even more than now.

I guess, I too, cannot lose. – Eiji thought.

- Pietro, I'll be going to the village and returning back later, so I'll entrust you with the job here. I should be back before the sun sets.
- Got it. I'll make sure that we take a proper break during the day.
- I'll leave that to you as well.

Being satisfied at hearing a reliable answer from Pietro, Eiji passed through the forest once more and returned to the village.

Chapter 50 – Mining (middle part 2)

Leaving the mining place, Eiji faced toward Eve's house.

The reason was to check how the weaver that was made the other day works.

kakon....kakon.... – once Eiji stood in front of the door, a slow sound of the wood was heard.

While thinking that it was probably the sound generated from stepping on the pedal, Eiji knocked on the front door.

Shortly after, the door opened. However, Eiji was surprised to see the person that stuck their head out.

It was Tanya, whom he had thought would be at house.

Behind her, there was Eve working on the weaver.

– Eiji-san, welcome back.

– Why are you here?

– Because I can't do any strength-related labor, I've decided to help with weaving.

– Tanya-san is doing her best. She dislikes becoming a burden to her husband, so she's is trying to weave some clothes, even if it's just a little bit.

– Seriously, please don't force yourself too much.

– It's fine, trust me.

Good grief – he thought.

Nevertheless, seeing her smiling face, which was thoroughly pleased, Eiji couldn't talk back.

Is there any problem with your body? – Eiji held himself back from expressing his anxiety that had gushed out inside of him.

Since Eve had experience in giving birth, she should probably be able to quickly deal with any problem that may occur, if there is any concern.

Considering it that way, it doesn't seem to be half a bad choice after all.

– I wonder whether or not she is fine. Recently, she has been speaking fondly of her husband while touching her tummy.

– Speaking... fondly?

– That's right, like that Eiji-san was in charge of making delicious meals yesterday, or that you were very gentle when paying lots of attention to her tummy, is what she said.... Indeed, you're loved, Eiji-san.

– W-Wai– Eve-san. Why are you exposing that to him?!

– Oh, was that supposed to be a secret?

– Didn't I ask you not to tell anyone?

– My bad, I forgot about that.

As soon as Eve displayed an unexpected look from behind, Tanya's face flushed rapidly.

Her eyes wandered left and right, and once their sight met, Tanya opened her eyes widely while asking 'why?' to Eve.

Her mouth was flapping open and closed as if wanting to say something.

However, in the end, she couldn't come up with any good word.

– Uuu~. So, embarrassing! Eve-san, you idiot!

– Well, at least, shouldn't this much be fine?

– Not at all! So embarrassing.

Saying that, Tanya covered her face.

Eiji bent his body while trying to look at her face. Despite of that, she turned around and dashed inside the house.

Will she be fine running like that? – There didn't seem to be time to worry about that for Eiji.

Once she disappeared under a cover, sounds of agony, such as Auu ~, Uwa~, were heard.

Recently, I've got the feeling that her words and deeds have become far more matching than before. – Eiji thought.

Still, because it felt kind of cute from her, Eiji had no particular problem with it.

- Oh my, Tanya-chan is showing a nice reaction when being teased.
- Please don't be too hard on her. I think she's a mindful type of person.
- Ah no, I don't think you should worry about it just because she's bashful. What's more, I too, want to be spoken fondly of by my husband after hearing other peoples' stories of that. So you could say I'm satisfied?

My bad my bad – Seeing Eve scratching her head, Eiji overlooked her with suspicious eyes.

This person is indeed good natured. – He thought.

As an engineer, Eiji too was curious about Tanya's reaction. Still, after witnessing how mischievous Eve is, he made a wry smile.

- Hey, Tanya-san, please stop hiding and come out.
- It's fine, I'll cool off here a little bit more.
- Hey, I'm really worried about you, you know.
- Hmm, Please reflect on your action.

Tehee – sticking out her tongue, Eve apologized. One couldn't feel

the slightest sincerity in her apology. Nevertheless, seeing her innocent smile, you couldn't bring yourself to scold her.

Breathing out a sigh, Eiji entered inside the room after being invited by Eve.

There were 3 sets of weavers standing.

It seemed that after the completion of the first weaver, Eve continued to mass produce cloths by herself.

With not much time passing since Eiji and the rest finished the first set, Eve alone strived to further make 2 sets of the device.

Considering that she wasn't an expert like Fernando, it was done rather fast.

Indeed, she has skillful fingers. – Eiji thought.

In front of Eiji, who was checking the weavers' performance, Eve went toward a particular one.

– You arrived just at the right time.

– Did something happen?

– There was something I wanted to talk about. Actually, I miscalculated the interval between the teeth in each heddle that runs from the pedal. Well, since it was working, I thought that there should be no problem, and continued to weave, but after that, the threads leapt at each other into a single one. I wanted to fix it by hearing your opinion.

– Can I have you show it to me?

Eiji took a glance at the weaver.

As soon as the pedal is tread on, the heddles that separate the woof up and down will begin to move.

I see, the threads have entangled each other.

With woof passing through, two warp threads will pass from the front side and one from the reverse side.

And once the pedal goes into the opposite direction, it will be one warp thread on the top and two from behind.

- This is....a twill weave, isn't it?
- Twill weave?
- What you usually do is a plain weave, which is passing the threads alternatively. On the other hand, the twill weave is a method in which the space between threads is deliberately shifted. Unlike plain weave, this method offers a thicker fabric that is more resistant to wrinkling.
- Then, I didn't fail to make it, did I?
- No, you didn't. I wonder whether it's better to apply this method on outer garments. I have the feeling that this would be much more suitable for making coats...

Eiji also didn't know much of details.

However, he thought that twill weave would offer lots of benefits, since it can be used to make various types of cloths which can be applied for different purposes.

- This is nice, isn't it? Won't it be better to produce clothes from now on based on on this 2 methods?
- Then, should I continue like this without having to fix the device?
- I think it will be okay.
- Oh my, I'm fine with making cloths, but, when it comes to mending them, it's much more difficult. I'm glad to have consulted Eiji-san.

Ahaha – At Eve, who was laughing, Eiji too, laughed back while being about to trip over.

It seemed that the technology had been developing little by little in quite an unexpected place.

Eve, who could make a contribution regardless of failure or success, was reliable.

- Well then, it looks like the problem has been solved. I shall go to the next place.
- Ara, that's fast. Even though I wouldn't mind if you took your time here.
- There are lots of places I have to visit, so that won't do.
- Tanya-chan, Eiji-san is already leaving.
- Eeeh?! I didn't have the slightest chance to talk with him because of me hiding, let alone having him see me working.
- I think you're the reason for that, Tanya-chan.
- It's your fault, Eve-san!

Tanya, who came out from the cover, sat in her post near the weaver, and began to work.

Once again, the inside of the room reverberated with the regular sound of a pedal being tread upon which made one's heart feel at ease.

It didn't seem like her small tummy was giving her a hard time yet.

Tanya concentrated on weaving while trying to bring his attention to her job.

Eiji silently observed her appearance for a moment.

Not much time had passed since the completion of the weaver, despite that, her hands' movements were highly accurate.

Treading on the pedal, passing the weft through and pulling them back toward herself.

In front of her hands, the cloth continued to form little by little.

Certainly, Tanya-san also gives her best when I'm not watching her.
– He thought.

Watching her at work, which wasn't common for Eiji, he too had the feeling that he could understand a little more about his wife.

- Then, I'll be going now.
- Please take care of yourself.

Tanya, who was concentrating on her work, called out to him with a composed voice.

Her appearance felt completely opposite to what she was a moment ago.

Having peace of mind, it looked as though Tanya was able to strive at her work.

Eiji's next destination was the watermill, newly built the other day.

After he walked along the gravel road while getting closer to the watermill, a murmuring sound of the river was heard.

The river in Siena was abundant in water. What's more, because it was the upper part of the river, its flow was fast.

It was an ideal condition for building a watermill.

The watermill was filled with various sounds.

The sound of the creaking from the watermill's shaft, the sound of something hitting, and even people's voices were heard.

And then, the presence of many people could be felt.

As soon as Eiji entered inside, there were the familiar faces of the hunting couple, Mike and Jane, as well as the women's camp that helped with the watermill's construction.

- Oh, isn't that Eiji? Why are you here today? Could be that teaching those unpleasant bastards didn't go well?
- I entrusted that job to Pietro.
- You shouldn't take them lightly.

- I guess that's because I'm their master, right? I'll make sure to teach them properly.
- If that's the case, fine. Then, why did you come here?
- I thought about checking the condition of the watermill.
- Oh, you mean this guy? It's really nice. Our jobs have been so pleasant that we even forget about what we are supposed to do.

The amount of power will change depending on the water receiving spot in the watermill. If it's a bottom-level type of watermill that absorbs the water from the bottom, it will only be able to generate some 1-2 horsepower. In case of a mid-level type, it can produce 15 horsepower, and for a top-level type, even around 60 horsepower is possible.

Still, a large amount of time is needed to build a facility that can generate this much power.

Because nobody in this village was able to understand the convenience of a watermill, Eiji couldn't receive much cooperation at the beginning. Therefore, he was only able to make a mid-type watermill that produces a little less than 5 horsepower.

Despite that, the watermill was still far more efficient in doing the labor than the people.

As for Mike, he used it for extracting tannin liquid for tanning procedures.

Besides that, it was used for grinding barks from oak, fir, and chestnut trees, as well as leaves from a lacquer tree.

A large wooden hammer matches the movement of the watermill as it rises up, and descends naturally, at the same time, knocking against the surface gently.

From the mortar, a characteristic, thick smell of plants rose into the air.

The watermill's job now was to squeeze out the remaining barks and leaves, which had already become unusually soft, to the end as a

compressor.

The lumber was provided by Philip.

Their cores were used by Fernando as a construction material, whereas, their barks and leaves were converted into an agent for tanning by Mike, as well as used for making leaf mold and compost by farmers.

And yet, their branches were burnt into charcoals for each household and Eiji's purpose.

Not wasting any part, a tree was thoroughly utilized.

Next to the hammer, Jane was striking the already tanned leather while gently changing its shape.

– Jane-san, what's your impression?

– Yes, it was of great help for a frail woman like me.

– Just whom do you mean by frail?

– You wanted say something?

Jane raised her fist and glared at Mike.

Nevertheless, Mike denied his previous statement while shaking his head sideways.

However one would look at her arm, it was thicker and stronger than Mike's.

Was Eiji to speak his mind, he would definitely be scolded. Still, he agreed with Mike on that matter.

It seems that even blacksmiths often had their wives take the charge of Aizuchis.^[1]

Because their job didn't require power but a skillful application of rhythm and recoil, it's said that there were unexpectedly lots of people who could properly do this job.

– I think it's natural to say, but this guy won't get tired, right? What's

more, even if I age or decline in strength, it will probably continue to help me with my labor? Thinking that way, I am truly grateful.

– I guess it might be so, but...

– What?

– I think that you're still very young.

– W-What are you saying!?

Jane, whose face turned red, slapped Mike and hid in embarrassment.

Despite being slapped, Mike wouldn't cease talking, making Jane turn obedient and shy.

....Ah, I see.

Becoming happy like this, is this is what it means to be spoken fondly of?

Eiji could now understand a bit Eve's feeling.

And at the same time, he felt content.

Next to him, the women's camp that had helped him with the construction worked diligently on threshing without turning away their eyes.

Indeed, there's a need for watching and learning – Eiji thought deep inside his heart.

Notes

1. In case you don't remember, they are blacksmiths' assistants who help with hammering.

Chapter 51- Mining (last part)

Returning back from Siena to the mining place, the sky continued to cover in dusk.

Under the sky dyed in bright red, there was a pitch black forest stretching, and in front of it, an ocher colored ground solely exposed by the mining place.

Pietro and the rest were probably doing their best.

A single place there that was designated for storing was piled up with quite an amount of iron ore smeared with the soil.

Pietro, together with everyone else, was sitting in a circle while having completely exhausted faces.

It looked like they were taking a rest.

Once they noticed Eiji's return, Pietro was the first to stand up.

Putting a carefree smiling face, he welcomed Eiji back. The rest of the pupils too, stood up at once.

Ah, indeed, I received a lot of pupils.

Finally, Eiji could feel what it means to carry people under his arms.

As soon he stood in front of them, Eiji put down the luggage he was carrying.

What he brought were pickaxes different from the one Pietro was using a while ago.

- Welcome back, Master.
- I'm back. Seems like you were giving your best there, weren't you?
- Everyone was working their hardest during their first day. It's just that Dante became worn out half-way.
- You idio–! Didn't you watch me working? I probably dug the most out of all of you.

Being pointed out, Dante retorted firmly; however, his expression didn't seem to display the same cheekiness as usual.

Indeed it seemed like he was working until he became worn-out.

His arms that had the same size of a woman's waist were probably digging out the whole time.

And saying that he dug the most wouldn't be far from truth, or so Eiji thought.

Katharina looked similarly exhausted as well.

Her usually energetic face has now lost its liveliness due to the exhaustion.

Despite Eiji roaming about, his body didn't conduct much of physical labor.

In comparison with them, he was still considerably fit. Nevertheless, having the rest work in his stead made him feel a little bad.

– Well then, looks like everyone was doing their best. Still, I'm going to ask you: are your bodies tired?

– I'm already worn-out. It feels like I'm going to get muscle pain tomorrow.

– I guess you could say I'm fine, but tomorrow, I'll surely be able to work more than today.

– For me it's the usual thing. I feel tired, but I still have some spare energy remaining-su.

– I see. Good to hear that. Then, let's resume the work once more.

At Eiji's words everyone, including Pietro, became surprised.

Their shocked faces froze as though time has stopped.

And then, Katharina showed a bit of a displeased face.

On the other hand, Dante was probably really hoping for a rest. His face was exposed with anger, and his shoulders were perked up.

The fact that his emotions didn't explode was proof the he matured within this single day.

In order to clear the misunderstanding which had probably occurred, Eiji lifted up both of his hands while trying to hold back the inquiring voices that were about to happen.

– Despite saying so, I don't plan to have you work for a long time. As a reward for all your effort, I'm going to tell the most important thing which I mentioned this morning.

Eiji held the pickaxe in his hands.

The pickaxe that was radiating with black was the one made from iron instead of bronze.

Eiji borrowed them from the farmers doing their work, back when he

returned to the village.

They possessed size, shape, and various attributes.

Everyone, apart from Pietro, took the pickaxe shown by Eiji to their hands while being immensely curious about them.

Hitting lightly, scrutinizing, they checked the pickaxe from various aspects.

At first, they would check in turn the pickaxe between them, but after a while, each of them chose their own pickaxe that naturally matched their physique.

Once Katharina picked the L-shaped one, she asked Eiji.

- Is this....?
- Can you understand, Katharina-san?
- Perhaps so, but is this the iron that you mentioned?
- That's true. Throughout this day, everyone has pretty much accustomed themselves to the pickaxe, right? However, we are talking about the bronze-made one. While being dead tired and unable to raise your hands, try to swing using the steel-made one. And then, tell me what differs.
-Hmph, you could say so from the beginning. So confusing.

Despite Dante speaking bitterly, his expression was that of a child that was given a new toy.

Smiling with a grin, Dante turned his shoulder and went back to the mining point ahead of everyone else.

His manner of walking looked as if his feet were dancing buoyantly.

Katharina and the three other guys followed him as though they were unable to bear the fact of being left behind.

Pietro, who had already witnessed the properties of the iron pickaxe, drew closer to Eiji's side.

- Master too, is mean, Aren't you?
- Why is that?
- Because if everyone was to get this motivated you could have lent us these pickaxes from the beginning? Were you to do so, wouldn't we have been able to work more efficiently-su?
- That would probably be so, but, if I did that way, the feeling of how it should be used probably wouldn't be passed to you.

- Is that so? I'm happy to be the who was allowed to touch a fine tool from the beginning, but-su....
- Even if you get your hands on a fine tool from the beginning, as long you can't notice its true value, you won't be able to acquire a good command of it. This also applies to you, Pietro.
- Uff, that was an unnecessary trouble I brought upon myself.
- What do you mean by unnecessary trouble? After this, there's still some remaining.
- Please give me a break.

I'm beat – Such words were seen on Pietro's face. Seeing that, Eiji thought that, indeed, he's still a child.

Nevertheless, it looked like he had done a good job as the senior apprentice by consolidating everyone.

Even the fact that he shouldn't underestimate Pietro was enough to make Eiji feel admiration for his considerable work.

- Well then, should we go and check their reaction?
- That's right. I wonder if they are overcome with amazement.
- I guess so.

A scene that Eiji predicted unfolded before his eyes.

It seems that whenever a person enjoys something, they will temporary forget about any exhaustion.

Both Dante and Katharina swung strongly and quickly with their pickaxes while being energetic.

More than a surprise, a smile appeared on their faces.

- Hey hey, even though it felt hard before, isn't the job progressing smoothly? Just what's this?!
- The one I'm using here is light. It feels like I can dig up endlessly with this even if I'm tired.
- Amazing.
- Ah, incredible. So this is the iron....
- I'm glad that I came here without opposing Franko. So this was

made by the person that's our Master? I'm happy to have met the right person.

Each person's impression was different, still, their amazement by the pickaxe's flexibility was all the same.

That was probably bound to happen.

Unlike casting, an iron that is the object of forging can change its hardness depending on its position.

For that reason, the tip of the pickaxe was strengthened so as to allow a more powerful excavation. The core part was made considerably soft, and small adjustments were added in order to lower the impact.

Because Dante looked overenthusiastic about digging, Eiji decided to ask Katharina more about her impression.

- How is it?
- This is, before it was hard, wasn't it?
- That's right.
- But this pickaxe is incredibly powerful and can penetrate inside rapidly, it's splendid.
- Is there anything else you noticed?
- Erm, it seems that my original stance a while ago had some flaws, why is that?
- That's because we were able to replace the tip which allows you to perform round movements. I folded the the steel around it like putting a skin on it. In my hometown there were few people who could do that, but well...

In Japan nowadays, all the pickaxes are made solely from steel. Using steel alone made it possible to forge a pickaxe with a low price, however, they still cause a considerable burden to the user. Since the amount of time that is required to cover the steel with ferrite doesn't pay off, as long there are no hackneyed blacksmiths, no one will probably bother to do that.

- What's more, isn't my pickaxe alone different in shape from the rest?
- The other ones are T-shaped, whereas this one is L-shaped. The L-shaped pickaxe prioritizes your balance; therefore, you're able to

do the job using light power.

- How did you know that?
- For a woman, it's easier to operate thanks to the pickaxe being light and relatively powerful. On the other hand, since you can't use both sides of your pickaxe, it will wear off faster? You could say it has both merits and demerits.
- Ha– seems like there are lots of things I don't know yet.
- Changing the shape of a tool in order to match it to the user, that's important as well.
- It will become good knowledge for me.
- Yes. It should be fine if you try the other pickaxes without continuing to work.

Katharina exchanged her pickaxe with the T-shaped one and swung again.

The fact that she was able to ask many things was proof of her superior eye for observation, which resulted in holding doubts.

This girl will probably become a fine blacksmith if she continues like this.

- Dante, how was it?
- Uhaha, with this I can easily continue for many more hours.
- Is that so? Well then, can I have you continue til tomorrow morning?
- Don't fool with me! Just how long do you intend on using me?!
- Calm down, I was joking. Then, what's your impression?
- Ah, certainly this guy is fantastic. With this, we can probably make weapons and do lots of amazing things.
- Dante....

A weapon?

The fact this topic turned up first in his opinion was honestly painful.

The very reason why Eiji let them use a pickaxe was because he wanted them to hold an affection toward using the tools as a mean to improve one's life instead of just tempering their body that is needed for forging.

To think that a weapon could extend beyond its own use.

However, there was nothing wrong with having such way of thinking.

There's no doubt that the development of smithing skills was closely related to weapons.

If one checks the history of Japan, one could say without hesitation that a blacksmith, who was considered one of the most prominent of people, was at the same time a swordsmith.

Similarly, Eiji's ancestors were also swordsmiths.

Still, Eiji didn't want to casually make weapons that can take away one's life. Therefore, he didn't want his disciples to follow that route as well.

It would be nice if Dante too, could think that way someday. – Is what Eiji had in his mind.

Dante seemed to be pondering about something as well, as he didn't utter anything.

Once Eiji turned silent, Dante resumed his work again with lively movements.

After each of them had frequently exchanged pickaxes and their impressions, the work was concluded.

So as not let them become rusty, they cleaned the pickaxes from mud and leaned them against the wall.

Seeing his disciples that finished tidying up, Eiji spoke to them in a serious manner so as to convey his thoughts, even if it was just a little.

– Thank you for your hard work today, everyone. I can imagine that it must have been difficult for you since it's not the kind of job you're used to, and you probably had gone through many inconveniences. In the end, making tools is divided further into two categories. The first one is when you want to create a new item using something that is already efficient. It's called 'originality'. The second one is about wanting to add improvements, and is called 'figuring out'. We don't know what kind of a blacksmith you'll become in the future, but you mustn't forget about today's inconvenience, which is what everyone

usually goes through. I want you to remember and treasure this experience from now on.

Hearing Eiji's words that were brought to a finish, Pietro and Katharina seemed to be greatly impressed.

Katharina's eyes became blurred as if being deeply moved.

Dante probably thought about something.

Holding the pickaxe silently, He stared at its tip.

Making tools is about bringing more convenience to certain people and making them happy.

In order to understand that, they had to experience the hardships by themselves first.

The reason why Eiji deliberately made them use the bronze-made tools and feel the severity of physical labor was because he wanted them to learn about those hardships.

Someday in the future, when they become strong enough to stand on their own, these disciples will probably grow to understand the meaning behind Eiji's words.

At least, there was no doubt that they understood the convenience coming from iron.

That alone as well, was a great success for this time's event, or so Eiji thought.

Chapter 52 – The Oral Tradition

It was the same night after the mining work had concluded. The starry sky unfolded, and the chilly air of spring was deadly silent. While everyone in the village was resting and preparing for the next day, the watermill near the workshop continued to generate sound. The usual noise of the river reverberating near the river bed at night was completely dominated by the sound of the working watermill. It was an unusual sight.

Eiji stared at the soft, orange-colored light coming from the pine tree charcoal.

The wind that blew from the pair of bellows was strong at times. The light radiating from the charcoal turned strong as well, and the sparks scattered closely.

Pachi – together with the bursting sound, his face turned hot with a roar.

Without holding fire tongs or the iron hammer, he watched the furnace.

Eiji's face was shining dimly.

Soon after, a single person arrived at the workplace. Once he stood up, he looked in the direction of the entrance. Because of the dimness inside the room, Eiji was unable to see whose face it was.

However, even without that, he could recognize this person. And there should be no visitors coming here at time like this. Eiji called out by himself.

- So you arrived, Pietro.
- Yes. Master, is there anything you need?
- First, close the door.
- Yes? Got it.

Gii – The hinge of the door creaked as the door closed. The inside of the shop, which was already dim, turned even darker once the moonlight was cut off.

Burning the pine tree branch with the furnace fire, Eiji filled it inside the pipe bowl and transferred it into the torchlight.

As soon Pietro was told to put the bolt on the door, he couldn't refrain himself from asking.

His voice was filled with suspicion.

- Ain't we being quite secure? Just what's the matter?
- You haven't told anyone besides your family that you're coming here, have you?
- That's right, it's because I was warned to do so. Only my parents know about Master calling me, still, they have no idea where I'm heading towards.
- Then it's fine. I too, didn't tell Tanya-san where I was going.
- Not even to Tanya-san?! Just what are we supposed to do from now on...?!
- I'm going to pass on the secret of smithing to you.
- The secret of smithing... to me....

Pietro couldn't grasp the depth of seriousness in Eiji's attitude.

However, his body trembled at once suddenly.

He probably knew well how important the matter in question is.

It was something that was known a long time ago, during the Edo period.

Back then, there was once a time when more than 10 thousand swordsmiths were believed to exist, and a single master had as many as 10 disciples.

Nevertheless, among those disciples, there were only 1 or 2 people worthy of being passed a secret skill.

What's more, leaking it to strangers was restricted by rule.

The rules were sometimes so strict to that even the secret would become lost in oral passing.

In order not to do any harm to the owner, like by committing a forgery, or creating a half-hearted item, the rule was also a form of rigorous self-discipline.

Even the reason why Eiji called Pietro without letting anyone else know was a part of that rule.

It was for the sake of not letting the secret being overheard by the other disciples.

However, Eiji wondered himself whether it wasn't still too early for Pietro.

There was yet another reason behind not recklessly disclosing one's secret.

Even though Eiji decided to bestow it upon his disciple, Pietro will probably not gain the full understanding of that skill, as he was yet unable to craft his own product with a satisfactory level of quality. Still, there was no doubt that Eiji wanted Pietro to acquire that skill first and grow up slowly starting from that.

Pietro didn't seem to notice Eiji's trouble.

He probably received too much stimulation from the fact of being about to be told the skill.

Despite the dim light coming from the torch inside the darkness, one could understand Pietro's face flushing with red.

Well, I guess it's fine?

By telling him fast, it will become food for his deeper thought. Now, let's sow the seed. Let's wait patiently and believe that the seed will someday grow into a large tree. – Eiji thought.

- Despite saying so, today, I will tell you just one secret.
- U-Understood.
- What? Are you unsatisfied with that?
- No! There's no way for such thing—
- Even if I tell you everything now, it's not like you will be able to remember at once.
- That would seem so.
- There's a kiridashi knife that I just happened to think about during my work, and want to try it out for tomorrow. We will use this.
- A Kiridashi?
- Yeah, we are going to quench this.

Kiridashi is one of the knives that are considered precious for cutting small articles.

As soon as Eiji stood in front of the furnace, he grabbed the kiridashi with a pair of fire tongs and tossed it onto the top of the charcoal made from a pine tree.

Sinking the iron piece inside the heat, Eiji operated the pair of

bellows.

The fire still wasn't hot enough.

Eiji intended to slowly bring the iron near its desirable temperature. While waiting for it to reach the target temperature, Eiji made an explanation that would become a prerequisite.

- There are several things you need to consider when quenching.
- Yes.
- The first one is to completely coat the iron in Yakiba-tsuchi, but, you should only make the blade side thinner where you want to harden the thickness. Whereas, it's fine to leave the side that is covered with ferrite to remain thick.
- So this is what Master always kneads together by yourself, isn't it?
- That's right.

The Yakiba-tsuchi^[1] is primarily made using the materials that are right next inside a workshop.

– Apart from now, I'll tell you about the method of making the clay again later, however, as you can see, we generally add some powdered charcoal with clay and mix them together with polishing stone powder, fine soil from mountains, and borax. Depending on what school it is, there are truly many methods of making it with each of them being kept as a secret. Because of that, we don't know much about the subtle differences that exist in their compounding. For example, it seems that a sword made in bizen^[2] tradition requires it being heat up inside India ink, and mixed with borax.

- Bizen tradition?
- It's fine to consider it as a part of a famous school. It's a technique that has been passed down for a long time in my country.
- I don't quite get what India ink and borax is, but I get it.
- That much should be enough. It is fine as long you can understand that various methods exist. As for more details, I'll leave it for the next time.

Even when they were talking, Eiji's senses were focused on the furnace.

His eyes observed carefully in order not to let any spot form on the

iron.

During that time, once a spot appears on it during the heating, it will become a large particle.

As a result, the iron will chip and its sharpness will considerably fall. It was just the matter of a small difference.

And the time when every blacksmith's nerves are unusually frayed.

However, Eiji loved the moment when the heat would increase the iron's temperature the most.

It was a scene that one couldn't see unless that person was a blacksmith.

The pitch black iron that was cooling down gradually became bright.

It was turning into red from the brown color, then changing into orange. With further heating, the iron became yellow, radiating with the light that was nothing but dazzling.

By slowly watching that light, Eiji was able to distinguish the temperature.

However many times he watched, he wouldn't get tired. Rather than that, the light would captivate him more and more, making him want to investigate thoroughly.

The appearance of the iron turning red.

It was a marvelous view, to the extent of making Eiji forget about his own blinking.

— I probably told you before, but—

— Yes.

— Never perform quenching during the day. Do it during slightly cloudy days, with closed doors, or when it's night. The changes in the iron's color are visible depending on the level of brightness. Those blacksmiths who do it in daytime can be considered only second-rate at best.

— Understood.

Unless the iron reaches the perfect temperature, it won't become hard.

Ascertaining the color of the iron is of utmost difficulty.

The people a long time ago used various colors to describe the desired temperature and turned them into their own secret.

As far as Eiji knew, in Bizen tradition there were azuki bean's color and sappanwood's color.

Whereas, in Soushuu tradition^[3], somewhat poetic expressions were used to describe different colors, such as the color of the fire passing through a lantern paper, or the color of the moon sticking out from the edge of a mountain during a summer night.

Once you grasp the changes in the iron temperature, you will see that the expressions hold true.

Still, there was no way to tell Pietro directly about them.

That's because all of these expressions were only passed on in Japan.

I wonder, what should I do in order to convey their meaning correctly to him? – Eiji wondered.

No matter how many times he tries to explain with great attention to detail, it takes too much time.

And then, Eiji came up with a single idea after thinking.

- When it's autumn—
- Yes?
- Wouldn't you talk about autumn colors?
- That's right. Even the leaves that change from yellow to bright red are lovely.
- If you find a leaf among the fallen ones with the color that matches quenching the best, then pick it up. It's fine to stare at it every day.
- If that's the case, I can learn that even without having Master show me.
- It's probably faster to memorize the color by observing it each day. After that, it should be fine to completely imprint it inside your head. We will begin the practice of quenching from that point, and this time you will remember it as the color for iron.
- But, I'll be able to enjoy it only when its autumn.
- Is that so?
- *complaining*

Normally, quenching would also be performed by checking the mercury bar on a thermometer and the level of hardness with any hardness measuring device, however, in case of this present day, it was not possible to resort to any of these examination methods.

Because of that, they could only make use of their memory and experience gained through their 5th sense rather than depending on scientific numbers.

While observing the beautiful light radiating from the iron, Eiji soaked it inside a bucket filled with water for quenching purpose.

Kssssssssssss – hearing the intense sound of water evaporating almost instantly, Eiji finished the quenching procedure.

The iron returned back to its black color.

Once it's carefully sharpened, the iron will probably shine with gorgeous silver color.

- Did you see?
- Yes, I've been properly observing.
- Excellent. For the next time, we will carry out tempering. As for today, it's okay to go back and reassure your parents.
- Master, thank you.
- Yeah.

Looking at Pietro, who was gently bowing with his head, Eiji wondered whether he too was able to act suitably as a Master.

Until now, they had been working together just like a father and son. Raising the small kid, while taking care of him, was a bit troublesome at first.

And once Eiji thought he would finally get used to it, more problem children, who were mixed with political intentions, appeared.

One couldn't think of future prospects as being only bright.

Eiji could only continue his method of trial and error while bluffing.

- Don't tell anyone about tonight.
- Yes, I'll definitely not tell anyone. Good night.

Still, to think that there were pupils who would deal with this seriously.

Considering that way, one would feel even more motivated.

Staring at Pietro, who was going back, Eiji too returned home.

Notes

1. : A type of a clay mixture for quenching. Here you can find more about it, as well as how the Japanese sword is made in pictures:
http://www.samuraisword.com/REFERENCE/making/japanse_swordmaking_process
2. : A city located in southern-west part of Japan which is known for its pottery.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bizen,_Okayama
3. : Named after a province in Japan. Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sagami_Province
Some pictures showing kiridashi knives for a better insight. Suggested by Ace.
[1](#), [2](#), [3\(Damascus\)](#), [4](#), [5](#)

Chapter 53 – Infidelity

A chilly wind blew.

Eiji, who finished passing down his skills yesterday till the late in the night, felt the sleepiness more than usual this morning.

He could feel as if his whole body was languid and his fingertips were numb.

Nevertheless, as soon as he went outside the house, his drowsiness vanished at once.

A rare sight unfolded before his eyes.

Dim clouds gathered right above him, yet in front of them, there was the sunlight striking the ground.

A boundary was created as though someone pulled the wire.

Looking up at the sky, a huge cloud was hiding the sun just in its corner.

Once the cloud was washed away vigorously, probably due to a strong wind in the upper air, the boundary line between the sun and shadow, which was in front of his eyes, moved, making the surrounding shine brightly.

The grass, which was moistened with the morning dew, reflected the sunlight while glittering.

Indeed, I just saw a rare sight. – He thought.

Witnessing a sign right in front of one's eyes wasn't something that one could often experience.

It seemed that this was a premonition of something good happening soon.

Eiji was a rather superstitious person.

He didn't particularly adhere to any god, still, as long there were signs, such as an upright-floating tea stalk, a foretelling during one's year's first dream, or any other petty superstition, he would consider them as luck.

What gave him relief wasn't the fact that something good was about to happen, but rather the omen itself manifesting.

There are instances where grasping the meaning will completely

change depending on one's way of reasoning, such as attentively watching a cup half filled with water and judging whether it's half full, or just half empty.

Providing so, Eiji would want to consider it optimistically as 'half full'.

Eiji began to harvest the asparaguses in the backyard field of his house.

He was going to mow the ones that are still bright green from the ground.

Because asparagus that grows too long becomes hard and sinewy, it's possible to extract them at once during the harvest.

Once it's pass the harvest season, the remaining thing will be to leave them for the use of stumps next year.

At the same time, most of the weed-like plants will be quickly removed.

Eiji felt the stiffness reaching his lower back due to the slouching position.

As soon as he stretched out and rested his body, he could see Katharina drawing closer from far away.

The time was early with the sun still not rising.

It was the moment when Eiji's household would prepare for the breakfast.

Just what kind of business does she have this early in the morning? Thinking that it was still quite early, it appeared that she was heading toward Tanya.

He could understand that Katarina came for a consultation regarding where to get firewood; cooking utensils, such as how to use a pot; and how to prepare food for sharing.

While washing the asparagus in the backyard, Eiji pricked his ear toward the conversation that was heard.

– The food is distributed per week under the supervision of the tribal chief, from the village's joint warehouse. Today, take some food from my place. After that, you can go receive them properly.

– Thank you very much.

– Do you know where to scoop water and collect firewood?

– I had somebody tell me yesterday, so it's fine.

– You probably still have work to do, so do your best, okay?

All the wheat crops from the village were stored and preserved inside the warehouse near the tribal chief's house.

The rations would be distributed among each household regularly per week, with the tribal chief being wholly in charge of managing.

If one was to commit theft under the pretext of hunger, they would be later punished with heavy labor.

Each household has the right to cultivate and pick vegetables in their own backyard field.

And everyone is free to do whatever they wish as long they exchange and eat their own food.

However, Katharina and the rest who had just arrived in this village didn't have their own field to cultivate.

Therefore, the village will probably have to look after them as they walk around asking for some food.

Especially since Eiji was their supervisor, it was highly probable for Eiji's household to look after them.

The talk between Tanya and Katharina covered a wide range of things, such as cooking; washing; and even detailed parts, like how to use louver windows.

Hearing their conversation like that, Eiji understood well that Tanya was doing her best in acting as the supervisor's wife.

Assuming that Tanya was doing that because of severity in Eiji's job, he would feel quite at ease.

Certainly, that fact made him feel increasingly humbled.

Seeing his pregnant wife taking care of his subordinates besides house chores, like cooking and washing, a feeling of gratitude gushed inside his body.

With the talk appearing to have concluded, Katharina went outside the house and moved to the other side.

While exchanging a vigorous greeting, she deeply bowed down.

– Good morning, Master Eiji.

– Morning. Did you sleep well yesterday?

– That is.... Because of the overexcitement, I was widely-awake and couldn't fall asleep.

- Is that so? Indeed, yesterday was your first experience. Guess it can't be helped.
- When I think back about how hard and amazing it was, just the thought of being able to hold such a splendid thing from now on makes my heart race.

Ahaha- Katharina who seemed to laugh bashfully scratched her cheek.

Snap – the next moment, her body suddenly moved with a snap.

- Ah....
- W-What's the matter?
- No, I probably overdid a little yesterday, so my body feels sore.
- It won't be just yesterday but from now on as well. That's why, don't force yourself, okay?
- I was too keen since it was my first time. I'll pay more attention from now on.

Katharina's expression was indeed a bit peculiar.

Feeling uncomfortable, Eiji made a wry smile, however, his face turned stiff from astonishment at that moment.

Tanya, who appeared from the inside of the house, stood petrified with an expression filled with shock.

Just what on earth happened?

Because Katharina was standing with her back to Tanya, she didn't seem to notice Tanya's presence.

Once she lowered her head.

- Well then, I still need to prepare my breakfast, so I'll excuse myself here.
- Yeah. Ah, w-wai-
- Master, let's meet again later!

Wait a moment – without being able to call out to her, Katharina dashed away, leaving that place behind.

In the middle of doing so, she passed by one another with Tanya, but, Katharina herself probably didn't harbor any grudge against her.

Thank you very much – she uttered with a bright voice as she casually passed by Tanya.

Tanya stood in front of Eiji as if changing places with someone else. Clenching her fist tightly, her body slightly trembled. Reversely, her face became pale, and one couldn't read what she was thinking.

Eiji, who was used to see Tanya's brightly smiling face just like watching a calm sea, couldn't prevent himself from feeling uneasy.

And then, Tanya's pupils directed toward him without being distracted by anything, even for a moment.

Eiji was stared at.

Her voice, though calm, clearly reached his ears.

- Eiji-san, just what's the meaning of this?
- Even if I'm asked, I don't know what you mean?
- Last night, you went out without telling me, didn't you? Was it so that you could fool around?!
- Fool around?! No, that's not. I didn't even meet Katharina last night.
- It's a lie!! That's because you have never been outside so late until now, haven't you? What's more, Katharina-san's reaction was clearly strange!

At her sudden outburst of feelings, Eiji who felt troubled wanted to hold his head.

Even he himself agreed that Katharina's reaction was clearly strange.

It was probably due to her unique expression that a misunderstanding was created.

Still, even if he explains that ways, it isn't likely to convince Tanya.

Seeing Katharina's appearance, it couldn't be helped for Tanya to have misgivings.

By any chance, Eiji didn't want to tell her, still...

Not having any option left, he decided to explain that he was together with Pietro during the last night.

Because he told Pietro that mum's the word to everybody, if possible, he would rather avoid that solution. However, in order to prove his own innocence, there was no other way to do so.

- Yesterday, I met Pietro after parting with the pupils at the mining

place. I thought about rewarding my senior apprentice by passing him a new skill since he has worked longer than the rest.

–Understood. Then, I'll ask Pietro directly without telling him the circumstances. If he says he was meeting you, then I'll believe it.

– Please do so. Even though I haven't done anything guilty, it's upsetting to be doubted like this.

And then, it was decided that she would ask Pietro for the circumstances.

Thinking that the suspicion will be finally cleared up with that, Eiji felt relieved.

Pietro would always head toward the workshop by visiting Eiji's house first after he had finished his breakfast.

Today, there was even more reason for Pietro to drop by his house, since he was in charge of supervising the others at the mining place again. Eiji understood that well.

However, it still didn't mean that the suspicion will be cleared up.

At the time they finished their breakfast with Eiji feeling his throat clogging and Tanya being in bad mood, Pietro arrived.

Wearing an energetic face that showed no fatigue from yesterday, Pietro didn't seem to be worried at all.

I'm really envious of that liveness of his – Eiji thought.

- Pietro, it seems that Tanya-san wants to ask you some questions.
- Tanya-san? What it is? As long I can answer the questions, please ask me anything.
- Well then Pietro-kun, I'll ask you, but, were you together with Eiji-san last night?
- With Master?
- Yes, that's right.

Why was I asked this sort of question?

With Tanya deciding previously that they wouldn't explain to him the circumstances, Pietro probably didn't know what was going on.

He put up a mysterious expression.

As soon as Pietro was thought to make a face of suddenly understanding something, he quickly directed his sight toward Eiji. Did he notice the serious mood?

I'm counting on you, Pietro. Say that you were together with me yesterday.

While feeling his heart going pit-and-pat, Eiji waited for the answer. Once Pietro sent a gaze to Eiji with full of confidence as if saying 'understood', he bowed down deeply a single time.

– Yesterday, I went to sleep after finishing the job. That's why, I wasn't meeting with Master!

– Hey hey.

That's wrong!

Even if I warned you not to tell Tanya-san, it's fine not to keep the secret for now!

Quickly rectify your mistake and tell her the truth!

Despite Eiji shouting in vain inside his heart, Pietro stated definitely.

Round-and-around – Tanya's face turned around.

Eiji gulped down his breath.

– Eiji-san, what's the meaning of this? Can I have you explain it to me?

The eyes of a trustworthy wife weren't smiling at all.

Chapter 54 – Living Apart

Sigh, the air feels hard to breath.
Good grief, why did it turn into something like this, I wonder?
Eiji tried to recall the main cause behind this turmoil.
It seemed that everything pointed to Katharina's confusing talk.

From now on, I'll make sure that Katharina pays more attention to her misleading words, so as to not cause any more misunderstandings.

The next time I meet her, I'll definitely point that out – is what Eiji engraved in his heart.

Thinking carefully about that matter inside his heart, Eiji hung his head in shame while making upturned eyes.
It was just escaping from reality.

Tanya's face, which was expressionless just a while ago, changed completely into the one with a friendly grin.
At first glance, it looked like a gentle expression, however, her eyes weren't smiling.

— Scary.

Eiji didn't have the courage to face her head on.
His usually graceful wife emitted a murderous aura without uttering a single word.
As if having one's every single move observed, Eiji couldn't move his body.
Time kept flowing in a complete silence.
Trying to explain things, he was unable to arrange his words competently.

Even though it was still a chilly day in the morning and evening, sweat was gushing out from his face and his hair was sticking closely to it.
Eiji's throat felt blocked, as if something was twisted inside, not letting him articulate a single voice.

In addition to that, a feeling of discomfort, similar to that of having one's stomach tightly gripped, accompanied him.

- How long do you plan to stay silent?
- That's, right.... Shall I explain?
- Please convince me, okay?

Being told without any hesitation, Eiji thought 'I'm beaten'.

Because Pietro already said that they weren't meeting together, it was hard to convince her.

Still, one has to do what they ought to.

Besides from interacting with each other as husband and wife, a quarrel caused by a misunderstanding was probably bound to happen.

And that would be the case of today's talk.

Eiji prepared himself.

He was innocent from the very beginning.

With the situation being bad already, if Eiji doesn't become resolute, he will bring more unnecessary suspicion upon him.

- First, there's something I'd like to say.
- What?
- It might be hard for you to believe, but... I wasn't fooling around. I'll be explaining things from now on, so please try to judge calmly.
-Understood.
- I'll do it chronologically.
- Yes...
- You probably know about what I did during my job yesterday. I took Pietro and the rest to the mining place, and after that, I walked around the village in order to check on the weaver and the watermill. I think Tanya-san too noticed that, but you can ask several people that saw me near the watermill and the farming fields. You will understand immediately that it's the truth.
- That's right, but the real problem happened after that?
- I brought my pupils back when I returned once again to the mining place. After that, I had a dinner together with Tanya-san. Later, I went out alone and met with Pietro at the workshop.
- But, Pietro himself denied that.
- That's because I told him not to disclose the skill I showed to him.

- Is the skill something that need to be kept in secret even from a wife that has no idea of it?
- I didn't want to cause a conflict between me and the other pupils. They would probably think that Pietro is the only one favored, being told the skill. Again, I feared that there might have been a chance for them to peek.
- Did you think that I would let it slip? Indeed, you don't trust your wife.
- It's not like that. If it was so, I wouldn't even be bothering with the explanation. Still, I wanted to lower the probability of disclosure, even if it was just a little. If nothing I say convinces you, it's fine to try asking Dante and the rest. Once you realize that Katharina wasn't slipping away, will you then believe me a bit more?

—

Was it because Eiji's voice was determined?

Her reply didn't come.

It will probably take a while for Tanya to consent with.

Eiji waited, he said what he was supposed to.

After that, how much of value will his action deserve?

- Master, Dante and Katharina have gather- ed.... O-Oh?
- Pietro... so it's already time?
- Y-Yes.
- Got it, I'll be going soon. Tanya-san, see you later.

—

Did Pietro notice the unusual atmosphere? He looked confused.

Despite Eiji rising up from the chair, Tanya showed no reaction.

It seemed that her doubt still hadn't cleared up.

Breathing out a sigh, he wanted to avoid worsening her mood.

Eiji left the house while feeling something heavy piling up inside his chest.

- Oh, Master, what's the matter?
- We will talk about that on the way, but for now, don't mind it.
- *surprised*

There was no way for him to scold Pietro.

Switching over his feelings, Eiji headed toward the gathering spot.

- Then, it was because of me that Tanya-san misunderstood-su?
- It isn't your fault Pietro.
- I, thought that it was in order to test me....
- I got it. You're honestly not the one to be blamed. It's my household's problem.

As soon as he explained the circumstances, Pietro dropped his shoulders.

There was nothing wrong with Pietro's attitude.

Still, that he gave a reason for the misunderstanding remained as a fact.

Eiji will probably have to regain his honor by figuring out how to explain the situation.

In front of him, Pietro raised his head energetically.

Unlike before, he had a gallant expression displaying a resolution.

The watermill rotated while producing the sound.

And then, the whetstone revolved.

Eiji alone was sharpening the tip of a kiridashi and a hatchet that he had been making the past few days, whereas, Pietro and the rest were continuing their mining work today as well.

Assigning everyone to their respective job is much more efficient.

Recently, Eiji has added some improvements to the watermill. It was made so that a portion of the water rolled up by the watermill would be carried by the bamboo pipe and poured on the whetstone. With that, there would be no need to pour the water separately during his work.

Except for the single part in the whetstone, the whetstone has to be moistened regularly with water.

A whetstone which becomes dry as a result of rubbing will generate a frictional heat that can damage the blade.

Also, this may create melt particles that can clog the gap in the whetstone, making it impossible perform sharpening.

Eiji hit the surface of the kiridashi's blade that had become sloped. The first thing to do was to perform a sharpening called aratogi by applying a whetstone with a coarse texture in order to improve the cutting path.^[1]

It was also a procedure known as haganedashi.

Depending on the grinding angle, the sharpness will greatly vary.

It was a task executed by Eiji countless numbers of times.

Without having time to think, his hands continued to shape the blade to the correct angle by themselves.

The water, which moistened the whetstone's surface, scattered in splashes.

Eiji carefully formed the blade from tip to toe.

After that, he reversed the blade to the other side.

In case the blade is formed obliquely on one side, a cross-section called 'makuri' that sticks out diagonally appears.

Eiji was going to grind the makuri downwardly from the reverse side.

As soon as the shape and the blade are created, the process of aratogi will conclude.

He grinded the 5 remaining kiridashis that were pre-made one after another with the same pattern.

The next step will be nakatogi.

Unlike before, this procedure will be conducted in a place where the revolving whetstone with a fine texture is located. The procedure is about neatly adjusting the coarse surface of the steel.

The fact that it will be performed won't change, however, before proceeding to that, it's necessary to wash the kiridashi clean.

In case the particles from arato^[2] attaches to the blade, the sharpening process will be incomplete, and the whetstone's texture itself will break easily.

Once again, Eiji continued his work in silence.

The blade of the kiridashi with a dim light running through it gradually assumed a glamorous surface while shining radiantly.

Looking at the surface while holding it up to the light, one could tell the clear difference at a glance.

A neatly polished blade won't rust easily.

When crafting edged tools, it's important to plan the use of iron, and

know how to conduct quenching and tempering well. However, sharpening was similarly, highly crucial. Even if one is to be handed a fine edged tool, these steps are meaningless as long that person can't maintain the tool.

– Ahh–

The reason why Eiji emitted his voice was due to the tip of the blade slightly hitting the whetstone.

The sharp tip of the kiridashi caused some damage to the whetstone.

That sort of mistake was rather uncommon for Eiji.

Or at least, this was the first time it had happened since the start of his smithing career.

– I wonder what's wrong with me....

Shaking with his neck, he breathed out a sigh.

Eiji was aware that in comparison with his usual self this time he was clearly lacking focus.

Something like this will be no good. I have to be back on track, even if it's just a little.

I wonder if Tanya-san has been doing anything.

Did she inquire for the truth?

Soon after the work is done, I'll understand it immediately.

Eiji hit his cheeks hardy so as to switch over his thoughts, and went back to work.

– I'm back

Returning back to his home, Eiji would usually await a warm reception.

Even if they have a quarrel, today it should be the same as always. However, there was no welcome.

–I'm back. Is she absent?

The sunlight entered inside once he opened the louver door.

As expected, there was no reply.

In exchange, the breathing sound of the cattle and the 'puhi puhi' cry of the Button rubbing against Eiji's feet were heard.

It was the first time for Eiji to be alone in the house.

Tanya would usually be awaiting his return with a face that was one time smiling, and another time, worried.

Despite sensing the cattle's breathing and Button's body temperature, the atmosphere felt empty.

Entering inside, he realized there were various things placed on the table.

What's that?

Due to the shadow, it was hard to perceive what was there, but once Eiji drew closer, he immediately understood.

This was a still warm meal.

She probably made it in preparation for Eiji's arrival.

The dish was covered in an umbrella manner with a hemp cloth in order not to let it become dusty and sooty.

And then, he noticed something placed in the shade of the plate.

It was the ring presented by Eiji.

The ring, which had its surface decorated with opal, reflected the light just like a rainbow.

Even though the deep black and charming finger ring was supposed to be worn daily, its outer surface had not a single speck of rust.

Eiji, who had seen numerous iron-made items till now, knew very well how much it was treasured.

Considering the daily sweat, water soaking, and filth, it was impossible to keep a ring neat and clean without any grooming.

Certainly, Tanya must have been wiping it with a cloth every day and smearing it with oil.

The ring was held dear.

With the ring being a bit larger than her finger, Tanya denied that her finger was big as if becoming somewhat sullen.

Besides that, she would gladly insert the ring numerous times and check on it while extending her hand.

And yet, the ring was placed here.

– Tanya-san.....!

Eiji went outside.

The surroundings were at the stage of becoming dark.

If Tanya leaves home, then there are not many places she can head toward.

The village wasn't that broad.

Assuming she has decided to live under someone else's roof, it will be unbelievably close as long as it's in Siena. Perhaps Tanya has returned back to her grandma's house.

Puhi! – Making a cry, Button pushed Eiji's leg.

– Ah, I'm going!

He ran.

Eiji wanted to meet her as fast as possible.

Because the evening sun would disappear behind the mountains, a normal day in Siena was far shorter than in other places.

The moment Eiji arrived at Bona's house, the surrounding was already dark.

Once he knocked, the door opened

Bona stood there with a stern face.

– Oh, Eiji? Just what's your business today?

– Did Tanya-san come here?

– Umu, she arrived here in the afternoon.

– Is that so? Can I meet with her for a moment?

– I guess that would be difficult. That girl is sleeping right now after clinging to me in tears.

Being curtly refused, Eiji had no answer for that.

The tribal chief added more toward Eiji, who couldn't talk back.

– Well then, what's the matter? That girl says that you were fooling around, but is that true?

– As if. That's a misunderstanding.

– Umu, I thought so. Well, if I'm to say as the tribal chief, I won't complain about whether or not you laid your hand on Katharina.

Rather than that, it makes me want to praise you if you did so.

Assuming Eiji assaulted Katharina, Siena would acquire a valuable worker.

The technology would be prevented from being leaked, and they could mix their blood with another person from the outside of the village. There were a range of good things.

The problem was whether the wives in a polygamous relationship would get along with each other; however, it was probably something Bona had no knowledge of.

Still, despite her uttering these words of approval herself, it looked like she would by no means accept that.

– I'm afraid, as that girl's grandmother, I won't be able to tolerate that. Well, I guess this is the whim of being one's relative. If you haven't done that, you better clear up the misunderstanding.

Bona made a faraway look.

Her eyes seemed to be reminiscing a distant memory.

– After that girl's parents died from illness, she would always raise her head and stare at the ceiling. Despite her eye corners being filled with tears, she would never try to shed them. I thought that she was a strong girl. Later, when we thought that she would finally marry into a family, she lost her husband on her first night. That time too, she didn't cry, and since then, she would continue to live alone in silence. To think that the same strong-hearted girl would be crying now.

Now you understand? – Bona asked.

That much meant that she opened her heart toward Eiji.

– I'll tell that girl to return back and have a calm discussion, but for today, go back. I won't be inquiring much into detail, so let's do our best in reconciliating both of you. It's fine for you to return now.

Eiji didn't say anything.

Then he lowered his head.

– Please treat me well.

– Don't worry. I don't think your relationship will break up over such a

thing.

Bona's eyes were very gentle.

The misunderstanding continued.

The next day, Mike called out Eiji.

His face was filled with anger like a raging fire.

Again – Eiji thought.

He was already quite fed up with this.

Eiji, who went outside just as he was told to do, noticed a person's silhouette drawing closer.

Just who could it be?

The silhouette wouldn't grow bigger.

Ah, is that Pietro?

– Hey, Eiji. I think I have already told you many times that if you make Tanya cry I won't ignore that.

– I already said it's a misunderstanding.

– Shut up! I don't care if it's a misunderstanding or not. The fact that you made her cry still remains!

– Please wait!

Just before Mike was about to lose his temper, Pietro stopped them by raising his voice loudly.

Tackling Mike's waist area, Pietro restrained his movements with his whole body.

Mike waved his body and wriggled while trying to shake off Pietro; nevertheless, he wouldn't let Mike go.

– Pietro, you're not involved in this. Only those who have the right are allowed to cut into.

– I'm Master's no. 1 disciple. Speaking of which, Mike-san too, is not involved!

– I've been looking after Tanya-chan as her guardian! Oh well, now that you understood, leave me at once!

Mike broke away.

Pietro stood between them and assumed a vigilant posture.

- I think I've already told Mike-san, but Master didn't fool around. It's one big misunderstanding.
- How do you know that? Don't you know that people can quickly fall in love with someone else? How can you be sure of that?
- I do. I've been working under Master's guidance all the time; therefore, I know how much he values Tanya-san. I know how he would fuss over their baby's name, and how much he would worry about Tanya-san getting injured or burdened while being pregnant.

At Pietro, who was speaking openly, Mike faltered a little bit.

Still, Eiji thought inside his heart.

He thought about how happy he was to be believed and protected despite receiving distrust from the surroundings.

Nevertheless, he felt mentally hurt for not noticing how his wife would speak fondly of him.

Eiji thought about wanting to put a stop to these attacks.

- But, you won't change the fact that this guy is distrusted?
- Falsely accusing others is much worse.
- Ugu. Still, there's no proof of his innocence?
- As for that, Katharina has already given her testimony.
- W-What the... is that so? Then, does it mean Tanya-chan has been guessing wrong all this time?
- Yes-su

Mike dropped his shoulders and breathed out a sigh.

- Seems like I've jumped to the wrong conclusion. My bad.
- Well, we didn't suffer any damage thanks to Pietro, so I don't mind. Still, we might be not that lucky next time. Please take action after you have confirmed the situation.
- Yeah.... But, Eiji, can I ask you something? Before, you gave the ring to Tanya, right?
- What about it?
- I thought about that time, you know, like 'I see, indeed, he's a good guy'. Unlike you, I gave Jane a boar when I proposed to her, but it disappeared once we processed it. However, if it's a ring, it

can retain its shape. Whenever Tanya inserted the ring and held it dear, the other men would understand at glance that it was because of you. As for me, I don't see the worth of giving a ring. At that time I realized that it would be better if Eiji might consider crafting one more ring for himself.

– It's.... I feared I would get burned were I to do my work with the ring on.

– It's not like you have to wear it during your work, right? Provided you wear a ring in front of Tanya, that girl will await for you with more faith, won't she? That's why I've decided to tell you. You know, it pisses me off when somebody makes her sad.

Mike released the strength in his arms.

Hearing his words, Eiji received the impact.

That alone took out the strength from his body.

Indeed, it might appear so.

Eiji didn't have the slightest intention of spoiling their relationship. He wanted to stay close and love her dearly.

Nevertheless, if Eiji was to describe her, she had a rather jealous personality. Even when he talked to her about having a child, she showed a bit of emotional instability.

Perhaps, it could have been due to the trauma caused by numerous misfortunes she had gone through.

Certainly, Eiji needs to blame himself for making her doubt.

Had he told her at least that he was meeting with Pietro, this uproar probably wouldn't have happened.

He thought about the plan for reconciliation.

Luckily, there was Pietro who gathered the evidence.

Bona too, said she was willing to help.

It doesn't look like it will be hard to resolve the misunderstanding.

But before meeting her, he will probably once more make the ring.

This time, for both Tanya and himself—

When making a ring with iron, the most important thing would be to

prevent it from rusting.

Fortunately, the iron he was applying was strong against rust.

That is also to say, apart from the iron being the magnetite with little impurity, the ring will be crafted using nothing but charcoal and live trees.

In modern iron manufacturing, coal and petroleum would be the alternatives, but on the other hand, in order to lower the cost of production, sulfur components would be contained in it as well.

Among numerous elements, sulfur is the one that is considered to possess the best quality of weakening iron.

Even in Japan, a fine iron, like Tamahagane, is refined solely by the use of charcoal. However, in the present time, the number produced is lowering with each passing year.

A highly pure iron is capable of maintaining its shape for many thousands of years.

The Japanese fasteners and Katanas discovered in shrines and Buddhist temples have preserved their beautiful design til nowadays, but on the other hand, it doesn't seem like the presently made iron will be able to last more than a thousand years.

Eiji decided to choose the finest part of the iron among the ones which he refined.

Using a chisel to divide the lump of iron into a small quantity for a ring purpose, heating it many times and folding back, then once again, repeating the procedure by turning it into a lump and folding it back.

While heating and striking the lump, the impurities continued to fall out rapidly.

And then, the lump of iron turned small with an unexpected speed.

Once it was done, only 2 ring sized pieces were left from the lump of iron that was previously as big as a fist.^[3]

Bending the lump of iron, first, Eiji was going to shape it into the ring. After passing an iron pole through the ring-shaped lump, he struck it while forming its figure.

The pole became thick to the extent of reaching the ring's base, making it possible for Eiji to adjust the thickness on his own.

As soon as the size adjusting was finished, the work concluded.

Unlike edged tools, this item didn't require quenching

– Well then, let's do the finishing touch.

Following Eiji's murmur, he engraved letters on the back of the ring.

- Eiji-san, I'm sorry.
- Please, forgive me already.
- Yes. I'll reflect on my actions.

Soon after Eiji finished the work and returned back, Tanya was waiting.

There was no reason for her not to believe Bona, still, Tanya was probably concerned to the extent of being disappointed in herself for spoiling the mood as she apologized while feeling ashamed.

Bowing down deeply, she didn't try to raise her head by any means. It seemed that Tanya, who was persuaded within the day, gathered the information after she, herself, had calmed down.

What's more, Katharina gave the evidence proving that she hadn't been going anywhere that day.

- I was scolded by grandmother and told that I should have more faith in my husband. To think that I'd behave like that once I acknowledged myself as inferior compared to another person. I, will definitely not lose.
- No, I didn't do that, you see. I mean things like fooling around.
- Understood. I thought that perhaps Eiji would consider doing that because you had no partner at night after I had become pregnant.

Funmu – At Tanya who was bracing herself, Eiji gave a reminder which had no misunderstanding in.

Still, they were able to make peace with each other.

Eiji didn't want to put Tanya under more pressure since her tummy had grown bigger.

He took out the rings.

One which he gave before and was decorated with opal, and another one that was a newly crafted pair of rings.

- These, are the rings of reconciliation.

- Eh, but you already made one bef—
- This time I made one more to match.
- Eiji-san too?
- Yes, please insert it. I made a simple one without gems, but...

Tanya looked attentively at the ring and placed it on her finger.

- Now it matches perfectly.
- That's because it's the second time I made one.
- These, letters that are engraved on the back, what do they mean?
- That's a secret.
- Ehhhh? Please tell me!
- A secret.

Tanya couldn't read the written letters.

Nevertheless, Eiji thought it would be fine that way.

That's because were he to read them, he would be feeling very embarrassed.

“Forever Love”^[4], is what was engraved there.

- Well then, let's do an evaluation meeting.
- Yes.
- I too am partially at fault for creating the opportunity to be suspected. Had I told you before that the skill is top secret without making any excuse, we could have avoided this conflict.
- No, it isn't your fault, Eiji-san. I should be the one to be blamed for jumping to a wrong conclusion.
- That's not true. Both Tanya and I were wrong in our own way. But, please have more faith in me as I won't betray you.
- Yes...

Tears flew quietly from Tanya's cheeks.

After that, they were back on good terms, making their conflict look like a lie.

With Tanya walking around the village with the ring, the other women became jealous.

Eiji reminded Katharina to pay more attention; nevertheless, it didn't look like she realized what was going on.

It will be difficult for her to improve.

There were also times when Eiji would hold his head, but everything

seemed to be progressing favorably.

However, two months later, a new problem was to occur.

Where Dante would hit a villager.

Notes

1. : Also known as hasuji. For more detail:
<http://www.thesamuraiworkshop.com/university/content/8/64/en/what-is-hasuji-from-a-backyard-cutters-viewpoint.html>
2. : Think I should've mentioned this before, but there are generally 3 types of whetstones: arato, nakato, shiageto. Aratogi means "sharpening with arato whetstone", and the same goes for nakatogi.
3. : It's certain that Eiji is forging a single ring, but for some reason, the author wrote 2 parts/pieces of ring. Still, can't figure out what he wanted to say.
4. : Written in English.

Chapter 55 – Mediation |

koreyorihachidori

Dante picked a fight.

It seemed that his opponent sustained a heavy injury: broken bones. Seeing Pietro, who rushed into the workshop with a panicking face, Eiji made a gloomy expression.

Pietro was probably running while trying to convey the message as fast as possible.

His breath ran out, and his shoulders rose up and down hectically.

Thoughts like, ‘Could it be?’ and ‘So it happened?’ welled up inside Eiji’s chest simultaneously.

After the welcome banquet, he was prepared for the situation to turn violent.

But, no matter how you would look at it, it was still too fast for that. Was this too, due to Eiji’s inexperience of being unable to control his disciples?

Not yet being fully acquainted with them, Eiji couldn’t hold that sort of responsibility.

It was an awful misfortune.

While thinking about that, Eiji interrupted his work.

Whatever the circumstances may be, Dante was still his pupil, who had received permission to become Eiji’s apprentice.

Eiji felt a strong sense of responsibility for leaving Dante alone.

Quickly stirring the charcoal and extinguishing the fire, Eiji sealed the furnace with an iron cover so as not to let any air enter in.

A fire that comes from charcoal can unexpectedly continue to smolder at any time.

Well, I guess it should be fine. – he thought.

In this workshop crafted by Fernando, only the vicinity near the fireplace was made solely from stone.

Because of that, the probability of causing a fire was low. Still, one cannot let their guard down.

The fire chips might float in the air unthinkably far away and become

the cause of an accidental fire.

At any rate, it was a blacksmith's workshop, heaps of charcoal and other fuels are a common thing.

Actually, there had been countless of instances where a workshop would be burned down as a result of an accidental fire.

For that reason, there were a range of fire prevention measures considered.

Such as building the place from stone, or using roofing with tile instead of straw and shingle.

- Well then, what's the cause? Don't tell me that Dante hit the person because he was hot-tempered or anything like that.
- As for that, we don't know the detail.
- Why is so?
- Dante won't talk, and the person that was hit is unconscious, so the circumstances are still not clear.
- Just who was hit?
- It's Augusto-su.
- Augusto, he was certainly... a farmer?
- Yes-su. He is a bigoted fellow who lives in the furthest northern part of the village. An uncouth person that does nothing but grumble and complain, and engages himself in gambling and drinking.
- Ah, I thought so. He was here once before.

Being told about him, Eiji immediately recalled.

Before, there was a man that came to request mending for his chipped scythe.

Based on Eiji's memory, at that time, Augusto was already giving off the feeling of reeking with alcohol.

However, it was quite right of him to make an order for the repair. Eiji was impressed at how well Augusto could grasp his own habit when he requested to adjust the scythe's angle to be a bit more acute, or that he wouldn't mind the handle being shorter.

It didn't seem like he was socializing with other people, but his conduct as a farmer was right.

He was one of the people that could predict the intention and act accordingly to Eiji's guidance.

Augusto isn't supposed to be someone that just drinks, still, should one say he was rather pessimistic? His expression would probably be close to that of a person in abandonment.

Because he was usually busy, he wouldn't talk much, but were he to interact more, it would be much better for him. – Is what Eiji thought.

To think that Augosto would be hit and have his bones broken in addition to losing consciousness.

It may be that he said something clumsily while being drunk.

- Whatever it is, shall we hasten our pace?
- Yes-su.

After checking the furnace and locking the louver door with a lock and bolt, they ran to the actual scene.

People gathered around a single man who was lying on a path between the fields.

Inside the crowd, there were Philip and Bernard.

- Hey, Eiji. This way.

Once he reached the place, he was breathing deeply.

Eiji's body should have become firmer after he had become accustomed to living in this village; nevertheless, in terms of physical strength he was still a weak type.

Whereas, Pietro, whose breath was just lightly bouncing, didn't seem to be tired at all.

This too was the result of people living in a countryside having more strength than those in a city, still....^[1]

As soon Eiji adjusted his breath, he greeted Bernando^[2] and Giorgio.

- Good day. It seems that Dante has caused trouble this time. Saying that, what's Augosto-san's condition? And where's Dante?
- Yeah, Augosto has his nose broken. He was about to go back, but is it because he's afraid? He would shout terribly whenever we tried

to help him^[3]. And then, a while ago, he lost consciousness again.

Bernando laughed as he waved the cotton swab ostentatiously. It became black from being smeared with blood. Thrusting the swab in Augusto's nostrils, he lifted it up from the inside.

Just imagining being done like that made Eiji twitch his face.

If anyone was to have their broken nasal bones adjusted without any anesthesia, they probably would moan in pain. – is what he thought.

It wouldn't be strange at all if you were to lose consciousness due to the pain.

However, considering this was a village where medicine hasn't developed, this method of adjusting didn't seem to be exaggerated.

Because hemp was cultivated, there existed hemp seeds that comprised the materials for anesthesia.

The water mixed with the smashed hemp seeds would be drunk to obtain the effect, but it was only reserved for shrine maidens and those who had severe pain.

It is said that shrine maiden would drink it so as to establish a connection with a god.

They probably knew, even without providing scientific explanation, that drinking the mixture wouldn't have a good effect on their body, hence, the rare use of it.

The blood from Augusto's face was neatly wiped off.

It seems that recovery will take time.

After a while, Augusto regained his consciousness.

Once he rose up, he looked around absentmindedly and realized his condition.

– Aww....!

– Hey, don't touch your nose, or I'll have to repeat the same treatment.

Augusto trembled while trying to cover his face, but after that, he lowered down hands.

It was probably very painful.

- Speaking of which, Augusto. Just why did you end up in a fight?
- That's well....*cough*. Give me something to drink.

The blood probably went into his throat.

Once Augusto, who made a dry cough, received the leather bag filled with water, he first rinsed out his mouth, and then drank the water while making a gulping sound.

He noticed Eiji.

Anger was showing through Augusto's expression momentarily, but following that, he covered his face as if getting depressed.

- Augusto-san, I realize Dante did something rude this time, but could I have you tell me how it happened in order?
- I was drunk due to my usual bad habit. My head was aching, and I wasn't feeling well.
- Yes.
- At that time, I saw Dante approaching while humming. Unlike me, who was troubled with a headache, I thought that he was in quite a good mood. And then, I remembered about the taxes. About the wheat crops that we had desperately raised being taken away by Nazioni. Our cattle's feces were also taken. The walls in my house are damaged with holes, and it feels awful whenever it's leaking from the roof. On the other hand, Nazioni contents himself with meat every day, has pretty concubines, and wring out our commission. Because of that I told him: 'Your father is one greedy bastard. You're all low assholes who don't give a damn about us having a hard time and only think about your own full stomach.'
- That is, I guess it would be natural to be hit after saying that?
- You, weren't you the one at fault?
- Yeah, I got it. Dante was calm from the beginning, and I was the one to provoke him while saying those things. I should have told him more awful things^[4]. That's why, he isn't to be blamed.
- Why did you say something like that?
- I was drunk. I wouldn't be able to say that with a clear head.

It sounded like an excuse.

Dante probably couldn't make up his mind.

If it was something told directly to him, he should've been able to explain the reason why he hit.

As far as Eiji knew, Dante wasn't the type of guy who would hold his tongue whenever he badmouthed somebody.

Eiji wanted to get angry.

Dante was at least a person that had been doing his job enthusiastically.

Had everything been peaceful, he should've become familiar with other villagers little by little.

However, this time's incident will certainly leave a trail. Considering it that way, Eiji felt his heart aching.

- Even so, what you said are his father's problems, not Dante's.
- Guess you're right. Sorry, my bad.
- I'm going to make Dante apologize properly later for what he did. As soon as the details of the incident spread, please resolutely admit your own mistake and don't turn Dante into a rascal.
- Got it. I shall do so.
- And then....
- What?
- From now, I won't be able to give you any of my distilled alcohol.
- W-What did you say?!
- There's no way for me to have spare alcohol for people who pick a fight. It's natural to prioritize those who can enjoy drinking, right?
- *gulp*.....that's right. I too, will reflect on my actions and give up on alcohol for a while.

At Eiji's words, Augusto seemed to receive a shock; nevertheless, he declared his abstinence from alcohol once he hung his head down.

Giving up on alcohol may be a hard thing to do, but for Augusto, who went through some bone fractures, it might be possible to reflect on his behavior a little bit.

What's more, leaving aside the alcohol, Augusto was quite a capable person.

Therefore, Eiji wished for his splendid revival.

- Master, I'm sorry.

- You say that you're sorry, but...
- I'm sorry.
- Show your face.
- Yes?

It was a rare and laudable attitude from him.

Dante, who covered his face as if feeling awkward, bent his huge body and stuck out his head like he was told.

Clenching his fist, Eiji dropped it from above on Dante's head.

whack – a dull sound reverberated.

This guy, has a tough head....!

It was a rock-hard head that would make one's punched hand feel sore.

Just how many bones does he have packed?

Dante, who was supposed to be hit, didn't appear to be in great pain, as he gently brushed his head.

-You know, it hurts.
- I guess Augusto, who had his nose broken, felt more pain than that.
- You're right.
- Dante, a laborer's hands aren't supposed to harm anyone, but to make certain people are happy.
- You've said that before as well.
- That's how a laborer ought to live. If you can't do so, then I have nothing to tell you. For your sake, it would be better to find another job.
- I....
- I want you to contemplate on that this evening and reply to me by tomorrow. Whatever your answer is, I won't care.

Saying what he had to say, Eiji placed his hand on Dante's shoulder. It looked like as though Dante himself was lost in his thoughts while being unable to utter anything.

Whatever his reason for coming in this village was, there is no happiness in being forced to do something that doesn't go well.

In that case, rather than doing so, focusing on improving one's relationship with people will yield a far greater result.

Dante isn't supposed to be a bad person.

Still, his living manner, which is tactless, can only bring misunderstandings.

Eiji believed that way.

The next morning, as soon as Eiji moved to his backyard's field, Dante was there waiting.

Did he wake up before the sun had risen?

Dante might have reconsidered it earnestly.

His eyes were resolute.

- You know...
- Hm, what?
- I've decided to do smithing
- Is that so? Well then, fine.
- Just like that?!
- Hm?

Assuming he made a decision after a lots of consideration and preparedness, was there any reason to refuse?

- I probably told you yesterday that whatever your answer was, I wouldn't care.
- O-Oh.
- Did you rethink it?
- Yeah, I did.
- Then, it's fine if you continue. I'll root for you.
- I-Is that so?P-Please treat me well.

Dante, who would always act important, became bashful at that time, having an expression of an embarrassed boy.

And then, he lowered his head.

The fact that he bowed with his head meant that he had accepted himself as no longer being the boss of everyone.

And at the same time, meant that he had recognized himself as the apprentice.

Without being influenced by his surroundings, this was his own resolution.

Dante had finally made a step forward.

Eiji gazed at him with a stern face.

Seeing Eiji's face, Dante tightened his expression.

- With that, you're the blacksmith apprentice of Siena, Dante!
- Aye!
- Starting with that, I'll give you the first command.
- Bring it on!

At Dante who hit his chest, Eiji said.

- First, you will sincerely apologize to Augusto-san.
- Y-Yes.
- You ought to hold the responsibility for your deeds. Later, there will be more labor waiting for you as a form of punishment. Aren't you glad? You will be able to display your power proudly.
- I-I'll do it! Damn!

When committing mischief, one will receive a punishment.

Despite saying the complaint, a sign of cheerfulness appeared on Dante's face.

Notes

1. : Dante is from city, but it was mentioned that his family's main forte is strength.
2. : I'm not sure whether or not Bernardo was referred as Bernard in previous chapters, but judging from the author's interest in Italian culture, it should be Bernardo, I guess. Sorry for that.
3. : Not sure if this part is correct.
4. : He is probably implying that he should have suffered more.

Chapter 56 – The Anvil and the Horseshoe

Starting from Eiji, the other 6 disciples, including Pietro, had gathered in the workshop.

The place, which would be usually spacious, was now congested to the extent of possibly hitting each other's shoulders if one was not careful.

- Heh? So this is the workshop. I've always wanted to see it, but now I finally get to.
- Well, I guess the ceiling is a little bit low for me. It feels like I'm being oppressed.
- Isn't it because Dante-kun is unnecessarily big?
- Seriously, it's not.

It was the first time for the group of 5 people from Nazioni to be shown the workshop by Eiji.

They have been working till now as blacksmiths; nevertheless, not even once were they brought to the workshop.

Every day, they would do nothing but head toward the mining place. Because of that, everything that appeared now in front of them was novel and intriguing.

Their eyes would look around restlessly without calming down.

- Hey, Pietro-senpai, this is?
- It's called a revolving whetstone. You use this for grinding blade tips.
- Cool!
- Oi, Pietro-san, how about this guy? Somehow, it has a pillar breaking through the wall, but...
- It's the watermill's shaft. And then, this one is the cog-wheel. With this, the power will be passed to rotate the stone.

Standing in front of the furnace, Eiji enjoyably watched his pupils' behavior.

He compared their figures to his past self.

Eiji would always stare at his father's back, not from inside the workshop but from the door which separated their house with that place.

His father's back, which faced toward the fire, would captivate Eiji. Therefore, the first day he stepped inside the workshop made his whole body, not just his legs, tremble with excitement.

It was already a story from quite a long time ago.

Eiji recalled the first time he had received a warning from his father. For a blacksmith, no rather, for a laborer, what was the first thing they should be told?

It was by no means something related to the way the hammer should be gripped.

Eiji looked over.

Dante, Katharina, as well as the other three disciples, had their eyes shining brightly.

He could understand their heart throbbing and excitement well.

– Well then, before I explain, I will give you a single warning. By no means should you casually touch the placed items and devices.

Shortly after being told so, the 5 of them trembled with their shoulders.

Perhaps, a moment ago they tried to touch things while being eager. Eiji continued.

– The tools of an artisan are the holder's soul. Those who use them casually can't complain about whatever injury they sustain. You guys still don't have your own tools, so I'll lend you mine. But pay a close attention. Once you are done using the tools, return them to their original place. Please bear these two things in your heart.

– Aye. Got it.

– Understood.

Together with Dante, who was composed, Katharina nodded energetically.

– Well then, let's show you how to use them in practice.

Eiji took the tools in his hand and displayed them one by one.

The anvil, which is the foundation of hammering.
The metal hammer that is the tool of striking.
The pair of fire tongs used for holding the iron.
The chisel, furnished with an incision for cutting and separating the made iron.
The metal brush, clipper, and the file, used for removing the oxidized membrane on the iron's surface.
All of these were handmade by Eiji.

Things that were made, stored, and improved little by little during his work breaks.
He has been using the tools for this whole year.
And becoming familiar with each of them.

Each time Eiji took a tool and introduced, the pupils would nod while pouring their sights on him.
Their eyes were saying that they too wanted to use them.
Their wish wasn't far from its realization.
First, it was necessary to increase the number of anvils, or perhaps you could say the foundation of work.

The anvil is the support on which one strikes the iron. It's also called kanashiki and kanatoko.^[2]

The iron is placed on the flat anvil and struck with a hammer.
An anvil that is used for hammering manually is relatively thin but big enough to do the job, but in case a strong force is exerted, such as the one from a water-powered hammer, a much thicker anvil is needed, since the weight will increase significantly.

Due to its large size, cast iron is often used to make them.
The characteristic sound generated during hammering is high-pitched and clear.

An anvil is like a musical tool that is used on stage to play a classic song called 'The Polka of the Blacksmith'

Assuming a furnace is used to make small things, two, and even three items can be heated at the same time.
With an anvil, however, only one set of the forging process can be performed on it.

Eiji brought a single, big piece of lumber.
Once again, everyone's sights gathered on him, and then, questions

were drawn on their faces.

They probably wondered about the purpose of the single piece of wood.

– From now on, we are going to forge the anvil. This wood, which is made from oak, will be used as the pedestal, and the iron plate will be stretched over the top of it.

– Ah, so not everything is made using iron, is it?

– It's fine. But, the process of making one is troublesome.

At Katharina's impression, Eiji answered with a wry smile.

The heavier an anvil is, the more balanced it becomes.

That's why, even if it's solely made from iron, it wouldn't be a problem.

However, when it becomes large, it will obtain a size which won't be applicable for striking with a water-powered hammer, making it difficult to craft things.

A long time ago, there was a custom where all the members from the same school would craft and present an anvil to the person that had just become an independent artisan.

Everyone would be holding a big hammer near the riverbed and strike earnestly and powerfully while forming the anvil.

And that alone was heavy labor.

– Saying so, now we will make the anvil. As for today, everybody will be watching and observing. Pietro, begin the preparations.

– Yes.

Eiji kindled the fire in the furnace.

Rapidly delivering the wind, the charcoal burned deeply red.

In addition to the large number of people, the inside of the workshop filled with an awful heat.

Eiji opened the louver door.

As the wind blew in, the hot air escaped a bit.

While wiping the sweat from his forehead, Dante said.

– It's indeed hot.

– Once the summertime arrives it will be even hotter. It's better to get adjusted while it's still early.

– Uhee.^[1]

- I'm completely fine when it's hot. It's just that I'm not good at dealing with the cold, still...
- Even during winter, the workplace is considerably warm, so you might like it.
- Hooray!

Burning the charcoal intensely, Eiji threw in the lump of iron. Once a considerable amount of heat transfers, the work will commence.

- Pietro.
- Yes!

He was going to make the anvil on top of an anvil. Eiji swung with a small mallet, whereas Pietro stretched the iron with a large mallet. The sound of the struck iron was surprisingly noisy. A talking voice wouldn't pass through.

Both Dante and Katharina held their tongue while having amazed faces.

Just like clay or a melt toffee, the iron changed its shape. The heated iron was already moving unrestrictedly, and the thick lump of iron began to form a sheet as it spread its surface. As soon as the iron becomes hard due to the lowering temperature, it will again be thrown in and coated with the charcoal. Sending in the wind, the heat increased. And once more, the iron turned red.

The metal was beaten in a regular rhythm without its sound stopping. There was already no one among the watching disciples who would say a word.

Everyone's eyes were fixed upon the artisan who earnestly repeated the standard procedure and formed the shape while making the item.

- Alright, put it on.
- Like this?
- That's right. You have done enough using the big mallet. Use the small one.
- Yes.

Forming the shape considerably, they placed the iron plate on top of the oak wood. The iron plate was spacious, to the extent of covering up things.

The heat coming from the brightly radiating iron burned the oak material a bit.

- Excellent, bend it while striking diagonally.
- Yes!

Eiji gave out a big voice which wouldn't lose to the sound of the striking hammer. Whereas, Pietro replied to that as if shouting at it. Each time the mallet was swung, the anvil would bend, and go along the wooden form.

The iron, changed.

From a simple object it, began forming into a tool.

The life was breathed into the tool from material.

Are you watching? – Eiji gave a signal toward his disciples without letting out his voice.

Having a chance to see an anvil being made was rare.

It was supposed to become a precious experience.

The reason why this work was showed to them as the first wasn't just because it was necessary.

Eiji thought that it would be easiest to leave an impression at the very beginning.

Perhaps, in 5, 10 years, as long they remember this day, it will turn a useful experience at the time they become independent.

Without interjecting, Eiji watched his pupils, who were staring in concentration.

Finally, the work concluded,

- We made it. Pietro, thanks for your hard work.
- Thank you for your hard work.

What they made was an anvil of about 12 kg in weight.

It was reasonably light and had a shape similar to the bottom of an iron.^[3]

The deep black iron covered the top of the pedestal made from oak as if surrounding it.

And then, only the legs were made from tree bark.

A profound feeling of exhaustion rose up inside Eiji's body. His right arm and his shoulders felt especially awful.

This time he forged it without using the water-powered hammer. It was because he thought about showing them how the blacksmith's work look like as much as possible.

Nevertheless, for that reason, Eiji wore out his arm. Even Pietro was probably quite tired from swinging the big mallet. You have done well – he rewarded Pietro.

Eiji passed the anvil to each of his pupils.

Won't it be too heavy for Katharina? – Eiji worried a bit; nevertheless, his anxiety was a needless one.

Despite her hands looking small, she was an energetic woman with the strength to swing her pickaxe all day long.

– I-It's heavy.

While saying things like that, she checked the anvil from various angles.

- Despite saying so, Katharina is lifting it quite easily, isn't she?
- I'm barely strong. A long time ago, I would be somehow misunderstood, and told that I'd smile whatever trouble had occurred to me. Isn't Dante-kun much stronger?
- Well, as for me, I won't lose in terms of strength.
- Hmm. Well, whatever.
- Hey!
- Oh my, at any rate, this brightly shining black light somehow makes my heart beat fast.

Dante's anger, which was showing through his face, didn't seem to reach Katharina.

She would gaze at the anvil zealously and ecstatically, to the extent of rubbing it together with her cheek.

Katharina has changed a bit, no rather, she has changed considerably, but it seems that her passion for iron-related things is real.

Eiji's attention was a bit drawn to her speech and conduct, however, he agreed with her being passionate.

A few months of manual labor isn't something that can be done

halfheartedly with a woman's body.

Dante, too, was studying and observing seriously.

His sulky remark a while ago fell silent, but despite his childish attitude, Dante would work genuinely each day.

It was high time to teach them about a blacksmith's job.

- Well then, everyone. Tomorrow, shouldn't you try making tools for your own use in turns?
- Is that fine?!
- Right!

At Eiji's statement, the workshop was filled with excitement.

Notes

1. : A sound you give when seeing or hearing something you dislike, but different from 'yuck!'
2. : Both mean anvil.
3. : The one you used for ironing cloth.

Chapter 57 – The First Smithing Practice and the Boat Trip

Eiji decided that his apprentices would be allowed to do the whole process from the beginning.

The first in the order were Katharina, and then Dante.

After fixedly gazing at the metal hammer, Katharina smiled broadly^[1].

Her eyes were suspiciously getting wet.

I wonder if it's due to her being happy from holding a tool for the first time. – Eiji thought.

While lightly hammering the anvil, which had nothing on it, she made sure of the sensation.

- With this I'll strike and craft things, won't I?
- That's right. But before that, let's hold the fire tongs first.
- Ah, yes.
- Using this pair of fire tongs, grip the lump of iron and put it into the furnace.
- Like this?

Once Katharina carefully grabbed the material with the pair of firetongs, she inserted it inside the furnace.

Using the fire shovel, Eiji stirred the charcoal inside and placed them on top of the iron.

- Hey, pull the right string. We need the watermill to operate and deliver the wind.
- Uwa, Uwaa. The charcoal is turning red! What's more, it's becoming hot.

Gigigi – the creaking sound of the wood was heard as the watermill began to rotate.

Being confused with each mechanism, Katharina showed a surprised reaction. For Eiji, it was an enjoyable experience.

Despite the furnace shining dazzlingly, she watched the flames with her serious pupils.

Her usual remarks fell silent, and her face directly expressed the

scene before her eyes.

- Master, the front of the furnace turned hot at once, didn't it?
- That's because we built the fire, you see. Well then, try to pull the iron using the fire tongs. The iron has probably turned red, hasn't it? Let's prepare for the hammering.
- Yes, please!

Katharina placed the iron lump on the anvil.

The iron lump was radiating deep red and emitting heat.

For a short moment, she stared at the heated iron while remaining silent.

The metal hammer, which was held in her right hand, was raised silently overhead.

And then, produced a big sound—

The metal mallet swung downward.

Holding a large mallet, Eiji took the charge of being an Aizuchi.

The hammer was thrown off at his whim and thoughts.

The lump stretched and hardened, changing its shape freely.

Interjecting his words from time to time, Eiji continued to adjust the iron's form even though he was stretching it with a large hammer.

Usually, a skillful master would hold a small mallet, whereas, his disciple would use a big one.

However, for only this single day, Eiji decided to do it reversely.

It was so as to learn the joy of making everything.

What's more, it's possible to create an item using a large hammer as long its making is simplistic to a certain degree, just like it would be possible with the spring hammer and the water-powered one.

Her movements are good – Eiji thought.

He understood that it was thanks to her genuinely swinging with the pickaxe every day.

Because the lower part of her body and her shoulders area growing balanced, the mallet won't shake when swung.

Forming the shape of the angular lump, the iron turned rectangular and showed a smooth surface.

After making a hole with a chisel, the shape will be adjusted so as to to give it a pattern.

Only this part of the procedure was to be carried out by Eiji.

It took them about 30 minutes.

The time was slightly short, but a mallet was created as the result.

Eiji could understand that she was excited with her first set of works. Katharina's expression was spellbound and her eyes became empty. Her posture of wiping the sweat with her arm was charming everywhere.

As soon as Katharina deeply exhaled her breath, she sighed as if getting burned.

– I'm deeply moved....

– Katharina, was smithing enjoyable for you?

– It was the best. It became hot, making it impossible for me to think. And when I started to swing the mallet with no obstructive thoughts... the item was done before I noticed.

– You did well.

– Ehehe....thank you. Master, ah...

Katharina, who was praised, turned bashful, as she smiled like getting embarrassed.

Nihehe – after she bent her mouth, she stared at her own hands.

Once Eiji checked, he noticed small blisters appearing on her hands due to the repetitive hard labor.

These were hands of a good-working person.

She noticed his sight.

– Ehehe, my hands don't look girlish, do they?

– They are hands of a laborer, so they're fine.

– You mean so? It doesn't sound cute.

Katharina looked sad, which was a rare sight coming from her.

Even though she had her heart set on becoming a blacksmith, as expected, it probably wasn't possible for her to completely abandon her thoughts of wanting to be pretty.

As if trying to console her, Eiji took Katharina's hands.

– Master's hands are much more rugged than mine. Both fingers and palms are full of blisters.

– That's right. Once you swing with a hammer every day, your hands will become like this whether you put gloves on or dislike it. That's

why, if you grow attentive of that, it will be your loss. Rather than that, shouldn't they make you proud as a laborer?

– Proud, you say?

– Yes. They are the proof of your good work.

Katharina gazed at her hands.

Clenching them firmly, she put her power into them.

The proof of my good work? – she muttered with a small voice.

– I, don't mind!

– Then, I think it will be fine.

– Oi, Master. The two of you seem to be quite in good moods, but, just when are you going to teach me?

– Good grief, I guess taking care of my disciples' feelings is also part of the master's job. Hey, Katharina-san, switch places with Dante, and do some observational study from behind.

– Understood, Master. *Sound of sticking one's tongue*

Sticking out her tongue toward Dante, she switched places with him. I wonder whether or not she wanted to craft more items – Eiji thought.

– Hehee, so is it finally my turn? Good grief, it's not good to only wait.

– Did you understand how it works from the observation? Since Dante is a strength-type of person, let's use a somewhat larger steel material.

– Aye, leave that to a huge guy like me. With my power, even 10 kilos will be light.

.....The anvil alone weighs this much. ^[2]

– How about you think a bit more before speaking?

– Shut up. It's about one's spirit, spirit. I'll show you what I'm capable of.

Holding a pair of fire tongs, Dante quickly inserted the steel material inside the furnace.

Doing one's best is probably a good thing.

There were unusually many of small misses in his conduct, nevertheless, his movements themselves were quick.

Tagging next to Dante, Eiji added some pieces of advice.

- Strike it while it's hot, and operate with the tongs so as to properly adjust its shape.
- The iron is still hard, so if I do so, won't it become considerably soft?^[3]
- There's too much heat.
- What?!
- When you add too much of heat, the carbon will fall out, making the iron become soft at the time of cooling it.
- Say that earlier!
- I think you were the one who told me not to say anything when you're concentrating.
- Ain't you mumbling there?! You don't feel well, I guess?
- Hey there, be silent.

Was it perhaps due to Dante being boisterous?

The atmosphere, which was tense a while ago, fell silent and was now filled with an enjoyable one.

Dante moved skillfully.

He swung well with the small mallet while quickly adding his power to the iron. It didn't seem like his boast of strength was far from the truth.

There was still a need to correct its shape, but the item was made even faster than the one made by Katharina.

Speed is also one of the abilities needed.

Provided his skills improve in the future, Dante will probably become a laborer who can surpass Katharina's delicate job in terms of speed.

- Well then, I think Pietro has made it several times up to now, but will you try it again?
- With pleasure!

With all the new disciples finished, it was Pietro to be last in turn.

Having made nothing but arrow heads til now, his handling of the mallet was more precise than the rest.

The right timing of the heated furnace, the right time to take out the material, Pietro understood well when to pay attention to various points.

The experience, which he gained during the last half a bit year, was

actually showing its fruit.

Katharina, Dante, and the rest were first going to memorize his work so as to follow after Pietro.

By teaching the other disciples his own experience, Pietro will be able to reconfirm his possessed skills.

A system where a lack of knowledge and imperfectness were supplemented by Eiji had been developed.

- Well then, shall we test out the things you've made?
- Uwa, mine feels somehow unbalanced. Is that really my product?
- Mine's way too light, I guess.
- In my case, it's just right.

Every one of them held and lightly swung with their mallets while checking them.

Each of them tilted with their heads as they couldn't be fully satisfied with their initial job; nevertheless, glad smiles resurfaced on their faces.

Unlike their workmanship, gaining the experience of making the first tool for themselves may have been more delightful.

And then, Pietro's mallet was a quality item that could withstand practical use.

- You did it. This experience will come in use.
- Uhehe. It's thanks to master's guidance.

Pietro, indeed, smiled joyfully.

Gently brushing, while disheveling, Pietro's hair, Eiji stood in front of the furnace again.

- Well then, Shall we add some adjustments? Detach the hammer's grip and lend me its head.

Eiji grabbed the mallet's head with the firetongs.

The pupils immediately moved and peeked sincerely at Eiji's hands from each angle so as to steal his skills, even if it was just a bit.

Eiji too, didn't say anything unnecessary.

Dante's mallet, as well as Katharina's, while considering each user's

characteristic, Eiji adjusted the shape.

Every time the red-scorched iron produced a sound, the mallet was sorted out into the desirable shape.

His movements were flawless.

Because there were no useless moves, the quality of his conduct was precise and faster than anyone else's.

– Amazing.....it's forming splendidly....

Katharina murmured, as if being deeply impressed.

There's a functional beauty in a shape that allows a simple use.

But even without that, one can understand how touching something is from its appearance.

While you can understand from just the look, manufacturing an item is actually a tough task.

Even if one can grasp the beauty of a picture, it doesn't mean that the person can draw it beautifully.

For creating beautiful things, a mass of experience is required despite perceiving their beauty.

Pietro, Dante, and Katharina watched, with respectful eyes, how Eiji was sustaining the heat from the furnace and wiping the sweat from his forehead while continuing his work.

– Fuuuu. As expected, I'm tired. Then, should we it try one more time?

– Incredible. What's this? Is that really the same hammer from before?

– Ahh.....it's pretty.....

– As one would expect, Master is amazing.

Observing reactions from each of them, Eiji confirmed that their words were most likely genuine.

– A mere and small adjustment of details can greatly influence the flexibility of application. That's why, by no means should you forget about the small details.

Yes – hearing their nice and vigorous reply, Eiji nodded.

All that he was supposed to say was told, and today's work concluded.

- How's that? My hammer. It's probably magnificent.
- Fufun. Mine's is much easier to operate.
- That's because it's a one-of-a-kind-item. It's just natural for its owner to use it the easiest.
- My hammer.....kukuku.
- Ahh.....my body is on fire!

Looking at his hammer, Dante put a bold smile on his face, and turned ecstatic.

His posture, which resembled that of a villain raising his voice, on the contrary, looked like that of a child, making Eiji feel pleasant.

Once Katharina clasped her body to her breast, she twisted it in a wriggling manner.

Seeing how her hands pushed up her voluptuous chest as it shook with a jiggle, Eiji quietly averted his eyes.

By no means will he lose to such temptation.

And neither his heart will sway.

It's because this workplace was a sanctuary for him.

That was unexpectedly close – Eiji thought.

The three other pupils, whose presences were usually low-profiled, were now stirred with excitement.

Watching that, Eiji agreed while nodding deeply.

From now on, they were going to increase their own special purpose tools, as well as their labor.

As soon as they do so, the labor efficiency in the workshop will soar up.

By teaching them skills that will allow them to possess their own specialization, they will probably be able to separate things reasonably into distinct parts.

Originally, there have been many blacksmiths who became independent in their own field of expertise.

Saw smithing, plane smithing, it won't be strange even if there are blacksmiths categorized by the number of tools alone.

Looks like I can have expectations in them – Eiji thought.

The wind blew.

It was a strong wind that blew from downstream to upstream.

The river that was proud for its abundance in water continued to flow while generating tiny sounds of water.

The closer you go near the center of the river, the deeper the water level becomes.

Eiji watched the transparent water from the riverside.

Behind him, Tanya stood without uttering a word.

The water surface glittered with the reflected sunlight.

Looking deep inside the opposite direction of the river, there was an unfolding forest which didn't make it seem like one could enter it.

Between them, there was a thin straight path that led to Nazioni city. If one walks it, they could reach the city in several days.

In addition to Tanya, Fernando was standing there.

– Eiji-kun, you really plan to travel with “this”?

– Yeah, I might have told you the minimum of the job, but it will probably endure its first period. Fernando-san made it, so I’m not worried...

– Well, I guess that would be fine. Since it’s the first time, as expected...

– It’s the first time for me to see Fernando-san being anxious like this. Is it going to rain tomorrow?^[4]

– Tanya-chan, you’re too cruel.

Fernando, who was always full of confidence when it came to his job, made a hoarse voice, which was rare for him.

In front of Eiji’s eyes, there was a single boat.

It was a newly built boat used for trading purpose, furnished with sail and oars.

After being suggested by Eiji, the boat was built by Fernando and his disciple, Thomas.

Still, besides the fact that it was their first boat ever, Fernando seemed to be quite worried about its possible sinking and overturning.

It will be fine – Eiji said with an easygoing attitude.

He believed in Fernando’s skills to such extent.

Eiji also knew that Fernando had been secretly making many small-sized boats.

The boat was now being loaded with cargo on the riverside.

Mike and Dante, who were in the center of attention, took charge of transporting the goods onto the boat.

In addition to their special products, which consisted of a large amount of processed fur items and wool made during winter, the boat was packed with Eiji's farming tools, anvils, and bellows.

The anvil was just made the other day. Because its inside was wood-made, it was suited for carrying.

Before, Eiji had doubts regarding trading with a cart.

Beginning with Siena and Tal village, there were other villages at the downstream of the river.

The role of the river water was to ensure that there's enough of water for agriculture. Despite that, it's much more efficient to use it for boat transportation.

At first, Eiji's emphasis on using the boat didn't receive consents, since nobody in Siena had ever used them. Nevertheless, after a patient explanation, everyone submitted in the end.

Tanya was aiding Eiji from behind.

- Oi, the preparations are done.
- I'll be there right away! Well then, Tanya-san, while I'm away, please remember about me.
- Leave it to me. Again, I'll do my best to improve my cooking skills and prepare a delicious meal for you. Eiji-san, please take care of yourself so as not to get any injury or fall ill.
- Tanya-san too, don't overwork yourself. If anything happens to the child, there will be no end to my regretting.
- I'll pay attention.
- Let's go, Fernando-san.

Eiji embarked onto the boat.

Mike and Dante pushed the boat out.

Gigigi – while producing this sound, the boat slowly swayed and advanced little by little toward the downstream.

- I'm off!

– Take care of yourself!

Waving his hand, Eiji continued to watch Tanya, who saw him off for a short while.

Her silhouette gradually turned small.

Finally, the boat went along the river and changed its course, with Tanya's figure disappearing from his sight.

Eiji faced forward.

The wind blew, it was strong and chilly.

There were no obstructions in the way of the wind which he felt on the river.

On the left and right side, there were riverbeds and sandbars. In front of them, a deep forest continued to unfold endlessly.

Together with the chirps of the birds, the sound of oar rowing in the river was heard from time to time.

Without anyone in the party uttering a word, the boat was advancing steadily.

Eiji's aim wasn't just Tal village.

He planned to visit all the villages near the river.

Notes

1. :: It's called nihera smile. Here's how it looks: <http://blog-imgs-61.fc2.com/c/h/a/chain001/140210-0222490148-1440x810s.jpg>
2. : Not sure about this one. Also, this and the later discussion will sound strange. mainly because third party people are interfering(I presume Katharina and some other disciples)
3. : Same as above.
4. : There is a superstition saying that it will rain whenever a bad omen appears. In this case, it's Fernando worrying.

Credits

Author

(肥前文俊) Fumitoshi Hizen

Illustrator

Three

Translator

Hachidori108

Book designer

Armaell